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ABSTRACT

This book examines the relationship between creativity and self-esteem in detail in order to help build a classroom and school environment and to design activities that will enhance creativity and self-esteem at the same time. Chapter 1 analyzes some of the obstacles to enhancing creativity in schools and proposes methods for overcoming them. Chapter 2 explores various facets of creativity that affect the classroom environment and brings up critical issues to consider when building a classroom dedicated to encouraging creative process children. The self-esteem model this book is based on is described in Chapter 3. This chapter provides a grounding in self-esteem principles that will enhance understanding of the link between creativity and self-esteem. Chapter 4 provides an indepth analysis of one self-esteem condition--the Sense of Uniqueness--and looks at how it can be nurtured in children so that their creative potential can be realized more fully. Chapter 5 offers suggestions on classroom organization, teaching methods, and curriculum to enhance creativity in all children. Chapter 6 is about the special role of the teacher. Chapters 7 and 8 are for administrators and school board members. Throughout the book there are general strategies and specific activities for practice. The appendixes provide personal arena behavior checklists and techniques for building self-esteem in the interpersonal and group arenas. (ABL)

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Reynold Bean

Individuality, Self-Expression & Other Keys to *Creativity*

Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

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Individuality, Self-Expression & Other Keys to *Creativity*

About the Author

Reynold Bean, EdM, has been a teacher, school administrator, therapist, educational consultant and school board member and has managed counseling agencies and residential treatment facilities for at-risk teens. He has conducted workshops on self-esteem throughout the United States for many years.

With Harris Clemes, he developed and published a model for self-esteem in 1976. *The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem: A New Approach for Elementary and Middle Schools* (ETR Associates, 1991) presents this model and is the parent book of a four-book series:

Cooperation, Social Responsibility and Other Skills
Individuality, Self-Expression and Other Keys to Creativity
Positive Risks, Challenges and Other Paths to Success
Honesty, Perseverance and Other Virtues

This series of books shows how the principles of each condition can be applied throughout elementary and middle school programs to improve the learning environment.

Bean has authored or coauthored many other books having to do with children, self-esteem and education, including *Elementary Principal's Handbook: New Approaches to Administrative Action* (Parker Publishing); *Self-Esteem: The Key to Your Child's Well-Being* (G. P. Putnam); *How to Be a Slightly Better Parent, How to Help Your Child Succeed in School, How to Raise Children's Self-Esteem, How to Raise Teenagers' Self-Esteem, How to Teach Children Responsibility* and *How to Discipline Children without Feeling Guilty* (Price, Stern, & Sloan).

Individuality, Self-Expression & Other Keys to *Creativity*

Using the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

Reynold Bean, EdM

ETR Associates
Santa Cruz, California
1992

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Preface

"It is in playing, and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self."

—David Winnicott, *Play and Reality*

Creativity has intrigued thinkers for a long time. In ancient times it was considered to be a gift of the gods; in modern times it has become the focus of scientific study by several generations of researchers. Philosophers and corporate executives affirm its central importance to living the good life and building profits through innovation.

People who are engaged in creative work find it both a joy and a burden. Most people stand in awe of creativity when it's expressed through great art, literature or other means. Some people consider creativity a special quality possessed by a few, those who have received special blessings. Others feel that creativity is a human capacity, available to everyone, and can be expressed in every aspect of life if people choose to. It can be squelched or constrained by a negative environment.

Since creativity produces things that bring awe as well as delight to human beings, it is both uplifting and threatening. For some, creativity is the sine qua non of life itself, a reflection of the universe's central process of creation, affirmed in the birth and death of stars and planets. Others see creativity as a

threat to stability and order, a process that could undermine those things society has deemed true, right and good.

Even though the average person might not give much thought to creativity on a daily basis, the issues it poses are constantly being considered in all the institutions of our lives. Should things change or remain the same? How different can something or someone be from the "norm" and still be acceptable? Should we try something new or stick with what we know? Is it art or trash? Is it unusual enough to sell, or is it too different to appeal to buyers? Everything from the nature of government to the development of a commodity is affected by the process of creativity. Creativity is a very big deal!

Many studies of creative people have shown that they became something special despite their schooling. Too many studies of creativity spend little time exploring the childhood precursors of adult productivity. But we know that how people are as adults, creative or noncreative, must have something to do with what happened to them as children.

The world needs more creative people, even if they occasionally seem threatening with their unusual ideas. There are too many new problems for which old answers are irrelevant. As the world grows more crowded and as the aspirations of the masses of people rise, there is all the more need for things that inspire people to value beauty, nobility and the fruits of disciplined curiosity.

There are children in your classroom who will become artists, writers, innovators, inventors and leaders in social change. There are even more who have the potential to become creative workers, imaginative parents, innovative community leaders and thoughtful citizens. Who are they and what can we give them in the classroom that will allow their best qualities to rise to the surface and be expressed?

I have wondered for a long time how we can capture the enthusiasm that children exhibit in play and allow it to be

nurtured and expressed in classrooms devoted to academic excellence, while encouraging children's devotion to freedom, tolerance, and respect for themselves and others. I believe that the link between creativity and academic success is self-esteem.

This book is one of a series showing how self-esteem principles can be used to develop powerful themes in school programs. These themes can influence every aspect of a program, including the curriculum—what's taught and how it's taught. This series of books is based on the belief that there are a variety of ways to achieve excellence in education, but *any path to excellence will be based on concrete methods that enhance children's self-esteem.*

The unique contribution of these books is to show how an important educational theme can be aligned with self-esteem enhancement to have a powerful impact on children. The theory of self-esteem underlying all the material is described in detail in *The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem*, the first book of the series.

Individuality, Self-Expression and Other Keys to Creativity explores how children come to be creative as a result of having good self-esteem, and what can be done in ordinary classrooms to make learning itself a creative process for children by nurturing their self-esteem in special ways.

Education today is blamed for everything from a bad international balance of payments to the country's loss of technological superiority. In such an atmosphere, building basic skills seems to be more important than promoting creativity as a fundamental educational goal. Some might say that the growing number of disaffected children, especially in inner-city schools, don't need to express themselves creatively—they need to learn to read! It can be hard to refute such arguments, especially if we try to justify the traditional way creativity has been dealt with in the schools.

The traditional notions do two things: they align the

development of creativity very closely with the arts, and they place creativity in the same category as "giftedness." This book disengages the idea of creativity from both notions, as much as possible. It will show instead how the creative process can become intrinsic to everything you do in your classroom and how attention to creativity is crucial to the development of high self-esteem in all children.

Our society is facing too many critical problems to *not* be concerned with nurturing creativity. We will not work our way out of these problems by rehashing ideas that may have been relevant in former, simpler times. New solutions will only come from people who believe that just about anything's possible and believe in their own ability to make the possible a reality. Our society desperately needs people who value themselves and have the confidence to express themselves in ways that convince and impress. Many of these people are the children currently in our schools. Releasing their creative potential is one of the most important things a teacher can do.

My own interest in creativity was stimulated many years ago when, as a child, I faced educational environments that seemed bound and determined to squelch what was unique and special in children. I often found myself fighting long and hard with my earliest teachers because of my inclination to want to do things my way. It was many years before I found teachers who could affirm the creative spark in me, a spark that I've come to believe is present in every person. Unfortunately, relatively few students find a great teacher who knows how to nurture that spark so that it can eventually generate its own flame.

I have had the good fortune to have been profoundly influenced by a few very special teachers. I acknowledge them here, because they provided the occasions for "quantum leaps" in my perception of myself, whether they knew it or not, and enabled me to release my own creative energy.

I heard John Dewey speak at a convention of student

government leaders when I was fourteen. This imposing, white-haired gentleman told us that our lives were real and valid and that we should never accept anyone's denial of our feelings and our needs. What I heard changed me irrevocably, and I have never forgotten that moment.

Though at times he surely despaired of teaching us physics and chemistry, my high school teacher, Pop Sowers, never stopped aggressively pursuing his intention. He taught with humor, took great risks of every sort, and always made his classes flash with energy. For reasons I never understood, he seemed to think I really wanted to learn science. His belief was far stronger than my motivation, but he established in me a scientific bent of thinking that I've never regretted, and I will always remember his passion for his work.

Arthur Morgan of Antioch College was one of the great educators of this century. His contributions as an engineer, social visionary, historian and philosopher and his effect on the social fabric of this country and several African countries and on education in India was profound. He opened for me a vision of community life that has never grown dim.

At Harvard during Erik Erikson's lectures on the stages of human development, I experienced a sense of the unlimited ways of understanding the nature of human beings. Erikson also graciously did something that all great teachers do—he showed respect for the developing but unfinished ideas of a student who was filled with more passion than knowledge. He left his imprint on those ideas, many of which formed a basis for this book.

Kay Clark has been my editor for all the books in this series. She is an author's dream. She cuts, moves, rewrites, deletes, pokes and prods...and somehow never loses me or an important idea. That's creative!

Introduction

The word *creative* means different things to different people. In its positive sense it can mean artistic, inventive, resourceful, imaginative, enterprising, clever, ingenious, skillful, talented and productive. It denotes someone who is unique, an individual capable of independent thinking, someone who can come up with innovative ideas and notable products.

The notion of creativity is used in negative senses also. People who are creative are often thought of as deviant, antisocial oddballs who don't think or act like normal people. They can be threats to convention, iconoclasts who do what they want, not what's expected. Creativity has always had a hint of insurrection about it, as if those who are creative think that the way things are isn't good enough; they are never satisfied with the ordinary. Creative people sometimes are viewed as critics of conventional values and behavior. Parents and teachers are sometimes ambivalent about whether they want to have creative children or students—"Don't be so *creative*, just do it the way I asked you to!"

Creativity, whether one considers it a desirable or undesirable attribute, is something of a mystery. We don't know how creative people get to be that way. Are they born creative, possibly having a genetic predisposition to divergent thinking and imagery? Or is being creative a learned skill, something we could teach children and adults to do? The evidence for each point of view is mixed.

Creativity in the School Setting

The confusion about creativity carries over into the school setting. In general, schools have not done a good job in deciding what to do with creative children. Some educators think creativity is a special talent of the gifted, who need special programs to nurture their unique talents. They tend to get bright kids mixed up with creative ones. To be sure, it can be hard to tell the difference, if indeed there is one. But after all these years of trying it, there's little or no evidence that such an approach makes sense.

Some educators have a more populist view of creativity, believing it is a potential in all children and can be nurtured, enhanced and even learned in the right environment. But too often there are few resources available to build the kind of environment necessary, so the creativity program becomes limited to an "on Wednesday we do art" approach.

Creativity, artistic ability, cultural advantages and high intellect get all mixed up when schools try to "do" creativity. When an activity that is supposed to give children an opportunity for creative expression, such as drawing, writing or dancing, is selected, the activity itself becomes the focus. Children who respond well to that particular activity are thought to be more creative than those who don't.

This approach disregards the fact that the creative process

is in the *children,* not in the activity. Children who come from advantaged homes tend to be better at activity-centered exercises, since they've had more artistic and cultural experiences than children from disadvantaged homes.

In some places the very notion of offering a program to enhance creativity smacks so much of an "elitist orientation" that educators prefer to avoid the whole issue. Fears about an elitist orientation arise from the belief that creativity is related to factors over which children have no control, such as their economic status, family background, physical development or ethnicity. There remains a suspicion in many educators' minds that advantaged children are more creative than the disadvantaged.

Teaching the basics has usually been antithetical to fostering creative experiences for children at school. You "do creativity" *after* you've taught reading, writing and arithmetic. As more and more children seem to be missing out on the basic academic skills, a concern for creativity seems misguided. Unless your district is in an area where parents demand that the schools invest in the cultural development of their children, it is likely that art, music and other creative outlets are low on the list of budget priorities.

Another approach to creativity is to view it as a "rare commodity." Creativity and "giftedness" tend to go together in many educators' minds. Both are thought of as rare commodities. A rare commodity in education quickly becomes a center for controversy. There are conflicts about funding programs for special groups over the supposed needs of the larger, "average" group of children. And there are struggles among the advocates of different rare commodities—special education versus gifted and talented, art versus music, assessment versus instruction. As long as creativity is associated with giftedness it will remain a controversial idea, and programs that foster it will be hard to implement.

Much of the confusion over how to work creativity into the school setting arises from a problem of definition. Creativity and the arts are often seen as overlapping, if not synonymous, arenas. This has led to two predominant attitudes: One is the belief that if art programs aren't possible, then we can't do anything about creativity. The other is the idea that if programs in the arts are in place, then something *is* being done about creativity. As a result of these attitudes, children who don't exhibit appropriate talent in one or more of the arts aren't considered to be creative, and art programs, no matter how meager, are thought to satisfy children's needs for creative expression. Both of these conclusions are simply wrong. And they limit our ability to think about encouraging creative self-expression in the classroom.

In the discussions about creativity that have gone on for many years, there is a polarity between the view that creativity is demonstrated by a *product*—something unique and special that can be seen or heard—and the view that creativity is a *process* within a person—the internal feelings, imaginings, thoughts and visualizations—irrespective of the quality of the final product. This leads some people to feel that creativity is present only if the product warrants the label, while others believe it exists if a child is in a certain state, and that the product resulting from that state is irrelevant.

A final issue associated with enhancing creativity in schools has to do with the quality of teaching and the characteristics of teachers. On the one hand, it's thought that teachers can't help children be creative if they're not creative themselves. On the other hand, those teachers who do focus attention on children's creative, expressive needs are sometimes thought to be a little odd!

All these approaches to creativity reflect valid concerns. But not agreeing on exactly what creativity is should not constrain a search for a more general and pervasive way to introduce the

idea of creativity into ordinary classrooms. You don't have to be a mathematician to teach arithmetic. You don't need to have published a novel to teach writing. And you don't have to be artistic or unusual in order to be concerned with and provide a context for children's creative expression in your classroom.

The process for creativity is *within* every child, not in the activities commonly supposed to give it expression, such as art or drama. A child's inner process comes to the surface and finds a wide variety of ways to express itself if the environment is sensitive to it, values it and provides a broad array of opportunities for that expression. We don't have to put creativity into children; we just have to let it out!

Every child has the capability to creatively express himself or herself, given the resources and standards of his or her society or culture. Schools can become powerful arenas for healthy child development by enhancing the opportunities for children to employ creative self-expression as an integral part of the learning process.

A Working Definition of Creativity

There are a few common themes that run through the research about creativity:

- Creativity is an individual characteristic, not a social one, although it can be expressed within or supported by a group.
- There is always some evidence that creativity has occurred. This evidence can be in the form of a lasting product (a drawing, a poem, a sculpture) or a time-limited demonstration (a song, an improvisation, a recitation).

- Creativity is always associated with children expressing something about themselves, something from their imaginations or personalities, at the same time they are communicating to others.
- Creativity, especially in children, is usually associated with play, fun, delight, spontaneity and free expression of individuality. It's also associated with some degree of discipline with respect to rules, standards, use of a medium, and social norms and acceptability.
- There is always something new about creativity. It can be new for the creator, even though others have done something similar before. It can be new for the observers, who may never have seen anything like it.
- Creativity wilts in the face of judgment. It prospers in a climate of acceptance. When children are being creative, they are always emotionally vulnerable, since they are exposing something very personal to others. Mishandling this vulnerability diminishes or extinguishes creativity.

From these themes a working definition of creativity has been extracted. This definition will be used throughout the rest of this book:

Creativity is the entire process by which children express their basic nature (their essential Self), through some form or medium, in such a way as to produce a product that communicates something about themselves to others and to experience a feeling of satisfaction for themselves.

Before examining the issues associated with creativity in the classroom, it is necessary to explore our working definition of creativity. Let's break down the definition and look at the elements of it that will be the basis for understanding and using the rest of this book.

The Process of Creativity

The entire process means that we don't make a significant distinction between the internal aspect of creativity (e.g., imagining, thinking, imaging, planning) and the external aspects (those concrete actions that children employ in the creative process). The external aspects are the things we observe when children are speaking, acting, painting, drawing, singing, or performing in any of the multitude of ways they have to express themselves.

What we must learn to do with greater precision is to create conditions in the classroom that allow and encourage the inner aspects of children's creative process to proceed. We do this by first designing safe, nurturing, stimulating and supportive activities and relationships, so that each child is free to permit his or her innate creative processes to operate and come to the surface. Then, we make sure the environment is rich enough with resources and opportunities to allow those inner processes to emerge in some communicable form or product.

Expressing the Essential Self

Express their basic nature (their essential Self) means that the uniqueness, individuality and singular essence of each child is allowed to manifest itself.

In talking about the Self, we are considering something that still has elements of mystery associated with it. Without getting too esoteric or vague, let's define the Self as the sum total of a child's individual characteristics that allow us to distinguish that child from all others. Some of these characteristics are physical, e.g., size, height, ethnicity, gender. We notice how a child uses his or her physical attributes to interact with the world. We can tell children from one another by the way they walk, run, or even cock their heads when thinking.

There are also characteristics that distinguish children from one another that aren't physical, e.g., ways of thinking, styles of interacting, imagination, interests, and emotional and psychological factors. All these things taken together make each child a unique person, the only one of his or her kind on the face of the earth.

This total "bag of characteristics" is more than the sum of its parts. Each characteristic may be shared with many other children, but the sum total of them makes Juan or Miranda just the people they are, not to be confused with anyone else.

As children grow and mature, this essential Self becomes more and more firm, less and less subject to radical alteration. It doesn't really make any difference whether it's a result of genetic qualities or personal experience. It is what it is! And that Self is the one we confront; the one that expresses itself in a myriad of ways; the one that peeks out from the most conformist and controlled conditions; the one that won't go away.

This essential Self, the child's basic nature, is the "driver" of creativity. It is the thing that seeks to express itself through speaking, writing, moving, painting, acting, singing and selecting what it finds interesting or useful in life. It is, in a manner of speaking, the "real" child. The creative process is the Self seeking to express itself to let the world know it's there.

The Creative Form or Medium

Through some form or medium is a way to say that the Self must have a real-world, real-time vehicle for showing itself off! All over the world, children are finding the means to express themselves. Whatever they find in their various environments is used in the service of this creative process. Children in poverty will find a stick, stone or old tin can to make into something else that their imaginations conjure up. Children in affluence will use colorful and expensive toys and artifacts,

although they, too, will resort to sticks, stones and old tin cans more often than not.

The form or medium doesn't have to be an object. It can be the voice in speaking or singing; the body in athletics, dance or work; the hands in molding, making, gesturing or stroking. It can also be a full range of materials from sticks and stones to paints and paper, old clothes, ancient arias and newly invented jingles.

The form or medium can have permanence, like a painting or construction. Or it can be an expression while a child is reciting that conveys the essence of an idea in a striking fashion, something that only lasts in the memory of those who heard and appreciated it.

The form or medium for creative self-expression is whatever is available, useful, appropriate or necessary. A child who is inclined to creative expression through art needs a range of objects or materials. A child who is verbal and dramatic needs a stage, however small or immediate, for his or her presentation of Self.

There are many forms and media in the classroom that can be used in the service of the creative process—everything from opportunities for self-expression through speaking, to allowing children to choose how they'll do aspects of their work, to specific art projects. This book encourages you to find avenues for self-expression among the myriad things you have children do on a day-to-day basis.

Demonstrating the Inner Self

To produce a product that communicates something about themselves to others means that creativity is more than just a feeling. It gives birth to a product that demonstrates the inner process within each child. That product is a communication about who the child is. It is a message about the essential Self,

the unique child who is performing the act of communication. This aspect distinguishes creative work from other kinds of work that children do in the classroom.

Classwork such as tests, assignments and various other learning activities that children experience are usually not creative in essence, even though some part of children's inner processes may be involved in their completion. Children are expected to have the "right" answer to problems in classwork and to demonstrate skill or aptitude in a particular area of the curriculum. While the Self may express itself here, the goal is not the communication of the Self to others, but the demonstration of a learned skill.

There are many learning activities, however, in which communicating the Self is important. Conventional art and drama activities are clearly ones in which this is true. Athletics for many children are an arena for creative self-expression. But many other opportunities can be developed in all parts of the curriculum. These range from permitting children to embellish their assignments, to creative writing activities, to allowing children opportunities to talk about their experiences in different ways.

Creativity, Satisfaction and Self-Esteem

To experience a feeling of satisfaction for themselves is the most important element of our definition of creativity. It is the key that relates creativity and self-esteem.

As you will see in Chapter 3, the notion of feeling satisfied or gaining satisfaction is at the root of self-esteem. To have high self-esteem, children must feel comfortable and satisfied in what they're doing and how they're doing it. Creativity is a significant vehicle for gaining this feeling of comfort and satisfaction.

When children express themselves, and when that expres-

sion is greeted with positive regard and an absence of criticism, judgment or shaming, their self-esteem is positively influenced. Having opportunities for creative self-expression enhances children's sense of their own uniqueness and permits it to become firm and strong. The connection between creativity and self-esteem is explored throughout the rest of this book.

What This Book Is About

This book is an attempt to demystify creativity so that classroom teachers and entire schools can devote more attention to this fundamental human attribute. It is about how to help children let out their creativity in all the things you do in your classroom.

The book is based on the following assumptions and principles:

- Creativity is a basic human attribute that arises from the universal capacity for imagination implicit in the brain's structure.
- Children are naturally creative when given the opportunity. They create products that result in delight and satisfaction for themselves and others.
- Creativity must be distinguished from giftedness so that creative opportunities in schools don't become elitist and restricted.
- Creativity goes far beyond programs in the arts and can become an intrinsic element in all teaching and learning.
- Teachers don't have to be artistic or engaged in activities conventionally considered to be creative to be able to encourage and promote creativity in children.
- The basic academic skills can be taught in ways that promote creative expression and creative teaching.

Learning and creativity are actually two parts of the same process and become separated at cost to both.

- School and classroom climates and values have a significant impact on whether creativity is supported. Individual teachers' efforts can become restricted and distorted in nonsupportive environments.
- There is a direct connection between children's opportunity for creative self-expression and academic success. The connecting link is self-esteem.
- The problem of whether creativity is defined by the product or the process is really a spurious one, since product cannot exist without the process. A self-esteem framework allows us to resolve this basic conflict over the definition of creativity.

This book examines the relationship between creativity and self-esteem in detail. It will help you build a classroom and school environment and design specific activities that will enhance creativity and build self-esteem at the same time.

Chapter 1 analyzes some of the obstacles to enhancing creativity in schools and proposes methods for overcoming them. Chapter 2 explores various facets of creativity that affect the classroom environment and brings up critical issues to consider when building a classroom dedicated to encouraging creative process children.

The self-esteem model this book is based on is described in Chapter 3. This chapter provides a grounding in self-esteem principles that will enhance your understanding of the link between creativity and self-esteem.

Chapter 4 provides an indepth analysis of the self-esteem condition the Sense of Uniqueness and looks at how it can be nurtured in children so that their creative potential can be realized more fully. Chapter 5 offers suggestions on organizing

the classroom, teaching methods and curriculum to enhance creativity in all the children you teach.

Chapter 6 is about the special role of the teacher. Developing a classroom that enhances creativity is a special challenge. Allowing children to be creative involves having a special attitude about children and about yourself. In this chapter you will find ideas to maintain your own creativity as you promote this quality in children as well as teach them solid content.

Chapters 7 and 8 are for administrators and school board members. These two groups have a profound impact on the overall climate for enhancing creativity, and these chapters contain principles and practical suggestions for how they can go about it. Even though this book is for teachers, you can use all the help and support you can get!

Throughout the book you will come upon suggestions for practice. Some are general strategies, others are specific activities. There is no specific formula or set of practices that result in the perfect climate for creativity in a classroom. Like creativity itself, nurturing it is an individual thing. What works for someone else won't do at all for you. You will find your own unique way. If this book acts as a stimulus to you, and supports you in your efforts to be the creative teacher you are capable of being, it will have served its purpose.

Can You Teach Creativity?

The controversy as to whether creativity is an inborn trait or something that can be developed through appropriate experiences has been going on for a long time. It is not a controversy that will soon be settled. Because creativity deals with internal processes of the perceptual structures of the brain, about which we know little, it remains to a large extent the mystery the ancients thought it to be.

But we can understand creativity better when we examine the creative process in the context of children's self-esteem. Whether or not you can "teach" creativity, you can do many things to enhance children's self-esteem, and as the rest of this book will show, self-esteem is the key to creative self-expression.

The simple answer to whether you can teach creativity is, in my opinion, *no.* The disposition to self-expression is simply a natural human instinct. You can't give it or take it away. It's part of life.

But you *can* create opportunities for creativity to be expressed. You can teach skills so that children will be able to confidently find forms for self-expression. You can stimulate children to greater goals, build their feelings of safety and security, and broaden the value of self-expression in your classroom. In a word, you can build their self-esteem in all its aspects, so that creativity is given an opportunity to flourish.

In so doing you ensure that the Self is respected and that the freedom to express it is preserved, so that every child will find his or her best medium for doing so. And those media can be anyplace in the curriculum or in the daily round of activities in the classroom. Creativity is not limited to the art room!

Chapter

1 Barriers to Promoting Creativity in the Classroom

In our society, individuality is highly respected and nurtured. Yet in social, cultural and political matters, there is always some tension between the individual and the group. That tension is reflected in our classrooms and schools. We support individuality and individualism, but we need children to conform in order to maintain enough order to teach. Any attempt to foster creativity must deal with this dilemma.

In this chapter we will also look at a number of ways this tension manifests itself in a classroom setting and how your ability to allow and nurture creativity in children is affected by it. We will also explore some of the reasons why creativity is not a central factor in most children's school experience. And we will look at a number of stresses and polarities that get in the way of implementing teaching practices that enhance creative self-expression in children. Resolving these dilemmas is usually up to the initiative and capabilities of the individual teacher.

Teachers who understand that creativity is a fundamental process and who seek to encourage and enhance creativity in

the classroom will contend with many barriers. In many schools, the following attitudes prevail:

- Curriculum is favored over instruction.
- Conformity is valued over individuality.
- Judgment is more important than acceptance.
- Industriousness is rewarded, contemplation is not.
- Order is preferred to spontaneity.
- Dependence on extrinsic motivation diminishes intrinsic motivation.

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

Curriculum Versus Instruction

Most American schools are curriculum centered, despite their use of euphemisms such as "child-centered curricula" that reflect a desire to humanize what goes on. Being curriculum centered means that schools, overall, are more concerned with *what's* being taught than with *how* it's being taught or even with how children learn in general.

Even the attempts to design curricula based on sound learning principles are rooted in a curriculum mind-set that divides the real world of experience into differentiated packets of information and skills. As a result, there are many proposals to rebuild wholeness, and promote a certain degree of child-centeredness, through processes such as core curricula, integrated learning, thematic teaching and other methods that seek to help teachers overcome the sterility of a differentiated curriculum.

Different interest groups in education promote their varied enthusiasms. Writing, science, social studies, mathematics, art, music, sex education, driver's training—each aspect of the

curriculum has its advocacy group. Each group seeks to promote the importance of its particular piece of the curriculum. There are places where this is less true, but, overall, it's hard to find schools where the curriculum is not the central focus of educational thinking.

Curricular thinking affects the way we think about creativity. Even the arts are divided into various segments—drawing, painting, drama, music, woodshop and various crafts. Writing (creative, to be sure) is sometimes considered an art, sometimes a language skill. We have recently added courses in photography, filmmaking, computer-related artistic activities and other media for self-expression that arise from new technologies to the list of possible arts courses.

Each of the arts contends for its place in the curriculum, each has its advocates and detractors. Sometimes a sort of stew is created by lumping a number of skill areas into one course or program designed to give children a broad exposure to different media. When children take such an art course, the school can feel that obeisance has been made to creativity, that one of the Muses has been appeased.

But children who aren't motivated by art or the particular art forms being taught may not express their creative Selves. The art class may not be their Muse. They may learn a skill but not use it in the service of creative self-expression.

In a curriculum-centered school program, teachers are expected to teach more or less the same thing to similar groups of children. All fourth graders might use a similar text for language arts, for example. Different teachers may use different activities from the teaching manual that suit their interests, talents or the needs of most children in their class. But these variations are still centered around the basic curriculum, and most teachers feel honor bound to convey that curriculum, and apprehensive when they wander too far from it.

Individual variations in instructional styles and techniques

exist, since no two teachers are exactly alike. Personal differences as well as pedagogical choices also cause some variations in the way things are taught. But such variations are usually disregarded since it is thought that what teachers are doing similarly is more important to transmitting the curriculum than what they're doing differently.

In places where a high degree of collegiality exists, teachers share their various approaches with each other and pick up new ideas, and there is usually more diversity in the way the curriculum is transmitted. In highly collegial atmospheres, individual variations in teaching style are more often respected and encouraged.

Instruction-centered programs focus on *how* things are being taught rather than on what is taught. Sometimes confusion exists about the difference between curriculum and instruction. Curriculum-based approaches require teachers to deliver a particular curriculum in a certain way. The curriculum remains the centerpiece. In an instruction-based approach, teaching practices are influenced by the curriculum, but are distinct from it in that similar instructional practices can be used in teaching varied curricula.

Some examples of instructional practices are relaxation activities (jumping up and down in place to "shake out" tensions or having calming music play during quiet activities), having the children rather than the teacher generate problem examples, and using learning teams rather than individual learning. All of these strategies can be used in most curricular areas regardless of the topic.

Because curriculum-based instruction is the norm in most schools, variations in how much is learned are usually attributed to the learners. If we presume that pretty much the same thing is being taught in pretty much the same way, then when children differ in how much of it they absorb, the variability

must rest in the children themselves. They tend to get blamed if they're not learning enough!

Creativity does not flourish in situations where the curriculum is the center of instructional practice. Since the curriculum is generally divided into measurable units so that relative success can be assessed, children's progress through the curriculum is the goal. Creativity is made of more ambiguous stuff and doesn't easily fit into the orderly objectives, activities, timelines, assessment techniques and instructional materials that define all formal curricula.

While curriculum-oriented schools are concerned with what children know, instruction-oriented schools are concerned with how children learn. Curriculum is content oriented, instruction is process oriented. When instruction rather than curriculum is the central issue in schooling, different criteria are used to judge teaching effectiveness and children's performance. Both teachers and children are evaluated according to their individual skills and strengths rather than by the degree to which they conform to a standard.

Since creativity is not a curriculum matter it has little theoretical relevance in a curriculum-centered program. Only when instruction becomes more important relative to the curriculum does creativity become a central feature in how children are taught. Self-expression, the central element of creativity, becomes a relevant learning method when teachers are seeking a variety of ways to reach children, irrespective of the subject being taught.

In an instruction-oriented atmosphere, individual variations in teaching methods are not just tolerated, they are encouraged. This creates an atmosphere in which individuality is valued. When teachers feel their own individuality is valued, they are more inclined to foster individuality in children. Creativity flourishes in an atmosphere in which individual differences are affirmed.

Schools that encourage creativity pay more attention to instruction than to curriculum. Such schools feature strong teacher support networks, a high level of professional collegiality, considerable time spent sharing classroom practices, and an emphasis on team teaching, core curricula, and various forms of thematic teaching. These schools are committed to experimentation and innovation. New teachers will be mentored and instructional leadership is valued.

Conformity Versus Individuality

Balancing the need for conformity with respect for individuality will always make teaching something more of an art than a science. When do the rights of individuals supersede the need for group cohesion? Is it possible to really individualize instruction in crowded classrooms with crowded programs? How are children's needs for affiliation balanced with their needs for autonomy and self-determination? The conformity/individuality dilemma exists inside the emotional framework of children's development as well as in the structure of classrooms and schools.

Developing creativity is a process that is rooted in the same dilemma. Although creative activity is an individual thing, it requires a context in which norms of support, acknowledgment and safety are subscribed to and practiced by both children and adults. It is overly simplistic to believe that a creative context always emphasizes individuality over conformity, even though there is some truth to this assertion.

The tension between conformity and respect for individuality is played out dramatically in several parts of the school program. Discipline procedures are a major arena where these questions come to the fore. The degree to which competition is a strong element in the school is another. The last major arena

where this tension must be dealt with is the general area of school norms, values and beliefs. We will look at each of these briefly.

Discipline

When discipline procedures, rules, methods and styles are designed to *control* student behavior they are more likely to demand conformity than respect individuality. In such an atmosphere the degree to which any individual's behavior conforms to the standards required by the teacher is the measure of acceptability. Rewards and praise are directed at children whose behavior most corresponds to "good behavior." Children who break the rules or challenge the standards are problems who must be made to change their behavior to conform to the accepted norms.

Controlling students' behavior in order to maintain a good climate for learning is a long-standing tradition in American education. The tradition is based on the theory that there will always be disaffected students who will disrupt the learning climate. The needs of the few who require control always require the many who don't to operate within a context of rules and standards that they don't need. The guarded hallways and security systems of many urban high schools are proof of this; most young people don't require that kind of control but must live with it anyhow.

Top-down discipline requires a high degree of conformity and places limits on individualistic, spontaneous and novel activity that can make school more fun and interesting—and more conducive to creativity. Yet novel activity is not antithetical to discipline, as the following example illustrates.

A new teacher took over a sixth-grade class filled with children who had the worst reputations in the school. She did many unusual things to assert control; her efforts were di-

rected to making the children partners in learning. She tried to show these recalcitrant youngsters that there were acceptable ways to get around rules. She attempted to get approval to have the children jog through the school's outdoor corridors as a stress-releasing exercise. The rule to be gotten around was "Don't run in the hallways."

She was frustrated in this effort by the administration, who refused to give permission for this unusual activity. So she had the children walk in straight lines instead, slowly moving past all the classrooms in the school while they were in session.

The other children in the school were more interested in those walking past their classrooms than in what they were doing in their classes. The new sixth-grade teacher was rapidly brought to task by her peers for offending the norms of the school.

But at the end of the year, when her class was acknowledged to be the best behaved on a school outing and the most improved class overall in the school, hardly anyone remembered that she had had to break out of the straitjacket of rules in order to bring about this transformation. Once her students could stop fighting external controls, they were able to manifest their inner ones.

When children enjoy what they're doing, are interested in learning and feel respected, they adjust their behavior to maintain the conditions that are producing so much satisfaction. This is why some teachers have few discipline problems despite having children in their classes who were problems in other classes, while other teachers seem to create discipline problems in children who never showed them before.

Discipline that respects children's individuality is not impossible, but it does take some effort. Such a system will have the schoolwide support of teaching staff and administration, will engage students in setting standards and monitoring behavior, will promote learning activities that grab children's

attention, will have a few central standards that are consistently held to, and will make clear to all students how their rights are protected as well as how their responsibilities should be carried out.

Competitiveness

A school climate that emphasizes competition and competitiveness will result in a high level of conformity. This may seem paradoxical—shouldn't competition bring out the best in individuals? But there are a number of reasons for this seeming paradox.

Competitive climates in schools are usually characterized by a strong emphasis on quantitative, measurable success so that the "winners" can be easily determined. There is often a tendency to put children into teams for various activities and then pit them against each other as a motivational tactic. (This is different from cooperative learning environments in which the purpose of teams is not to beat others but to accomplish a task cooperatively.) There is usually a strong orientation to team and individual competitive sports, and sports metaphors (being a winner or champion, part of the team, and so on) are used extensively throughout the school.

Competitive schools and classrooms offer rewards for many academic and nonacademic activities, requiring extensive record keeping to know who qualifies for them. Informally, the children tend to stratify their social system so that the various types of "winners" have higher status.

Children in competitive classrooms are valued based on their ability to be winners, to support their teams, and to conform to the various features of the competitive ethic. Conformity to group norms and values is a natural result of this. Children who don't conform are considered a little odd—

individualists who stand out from the crowd because of their nonconformity.

One of the main reasons children tend to clump together in groups in competitive schools is that most of them are *not* winners! Anxiety, alienation, dependency and need for safe connections in the competitive atmosphere drive many children to form what are no less than support groups. Such needs preclude the exercise of creative self-expression; belonging and acceptability become higher values than individuality and risk taking.

Being a member of a team is important to children. The need to belong and be accepted varies in its power throughout childhood, just as adults differ as to how strong such motives are in them. But, overall, competitiveness demands allegiances that undermine individuality. When the emphasis on competition is reduced and the ethic of respect for individual differences is present, children are more likely to feel safe enough to permit themselves freer self-expression in creative ways.

Norms, Values and Beliefs

Every school is a social system, a mini-culture, that is defined by norms, values and beliefs. These determine which activities and behavior will be accepted and which disparaged. Most schools and classrooms tend to have norms, values and beliefs that emphasize conformity rather than support individuality. This is especially the case when these factors are left implicit rather than dealt with explicitly.

Schools that support conformity:

- Emphasize being part of the team.
- Have rewards for socially functional behavior (e.g., most helpful, cooperative or friendly).
- Have behavior or dress codes for students *and* teachers that seek uniformity at some level.

- Are more concerned with student responsibilities than student rights.
- Value teachers who exercise good controls, have a high degree of orderliness, and keep their rooms clean and neat.

Schools that support individuality:

- Have a high regard for children who demonstrate unique skills, talents or personal characteristics, even if these are only marginally related to the curriculum.
- Respect teachers who demonstrate a high degree of innovation in their programs.
- Place more emphasis on productivity than on orderliness.
- Have recognition for unusual individual performances and give children wide latitude for undertaking personal projects.
- Have strong and active concern for student rights, demonstrated through clear grievance and appeal procedures.
- Create many activities that encourage individual variations (e.g., costume days, writing annuals, art shows).

When people, including children, come together in groups they naturally tend to develop an ethos that supports group cohesion. Individuality—being different—is not a quality that automatically results in group cohesion. This is one reason that creativity is not easily promoted in group atmospheres. In schools and classrooms, the respect for individuality is achieved as a result of persistent attention to how individuality is manifested and promoted in the school environment. Concern for the individual needs to consist of more than lip service or an aphorism at the top of the district letterhead.

For creativity to be an important process in a school, its various expressions have to represent important values and beliefs in that school. The importance of the individual is evidenced, for example, through how much diversity is accepted in dress, personal style and the interests teachers permit children to bring to class. Individuality is supported by having a wide variety of extracurricular activities both during and after school, so that more children are able to find an avenue for expressing their interests and talents.

Respect for creativity is shown by having children's artwork displayed around the school. The degree to which personal expression is part of the ordinary curriculum is evidence of the support of individuality. This can be seen in an emphasis on classroom discussion in all areas and inclusion of creative opportunities in all subjects.

There are many ways that creative opportunities can be identified in everyday school work: Have children do assignments in colored pencils that exemplify their mood. Have children write a sentence or two after a conventional activity that says how they felt about it. Encourage children to finish an assignment early in order to have time for a personal project they wish to work on.

Judgment Versus Acceptance

A fundamental issue faced by those who work with children is the tension between judging what they do and accepting who they are. Every sensitive teacher feels the pressure that results from this polarity. Any attempt to encourage creativity must deal with this particular tension as well.

It's hard to think of school without thinking about assessment. In order for schools to prove they're doing a good job, teachers must produce good test results. Consequently, chil-

dren must be measured in some way. Children are subjected to judgment constantly. Those who are found most wanting are most subject to it, and often are the ones who react most poorly to a climate of judgment.

I specifically use the word judgment rather than criticism, because praise as well as criticism is a judgment. Telling a child he's done something well is as much a judgment as telling him he's done something badly. There are many children who resist judgments about themselves, positive or negative. Among these are children with a high creative inclination, children who need to find a means for self-expression that won't be judged.

Praise is not the same as acceptance. Praise is a judgment—"Your picture is well done." Acceptance is a communication that a child's behavior has been witnessed and understood—"You seem quite satisfied with your picture." Schools and teachers are generally so committed to measuring performance that simple acceptance of what children do in their creative moments is hard to find.

Creativity needs a climate of acceptance in order to prosper. The creative process has many false starts as well as successes along the way as children try to make satisfying representations of themselves through some medium. Judging everything that children do is likely to make many children gun-shy; they avoid self-expression for fear of being judged and found wanting relative to their peers or some abstract standard. Teachers, even the best and most sensitive, are so habituated to judging children's work, even when seeking opportunities to praise, that it's very hard not to do so.

Acceptance becomes a reality when children believe that something they do will really not be judged. Having children keep journals that teachers may read but don't grade is one example. Asking children whether they wish the teacher to make comments about their poems is another, as long as the teacher abides by their wishes. Finding alternative ways for

children to demonstrate their mastery of something without taking a test allows children to find their own methods for showing what they know.

Schools cannot become totally free of judgment. Whether or not it's good pedagogy isn't the only issue. Political and economic forces demand that children be measured to justify what the schools are doing. But inside the classroom, teachers can find many opportunities to balance judgment with acceptance so that children can express who they are and what they feel without worrying about being judged for something over which they have no control.

Industriousness Versus Contemplation

Schools are places where things get done. If children aren't being industrious, teachers and parents find something for them to do—usually something the adults believe is important.

Being industrious is clearly a virtue, a quality to be wished for in more children. Teachers are always seeking ways to make the work more interesting or stimulating so that children will be inclined to want to do it more avidly. Industriousness cannot be criticized as either a goal or a style of schooling.

But this doesn't mean it is the best climate in which to encourage creativity. Creative work requires a climate in which contemplation also is valued for the results it produces. A contemplative stage before active production starts is usually part of the creative process. But sometimes children start something, stop to think about it for a while, and then start again. From the outside, it may look as if they're not doing anything, but contemplation about their purpose and how to carry it out may be going on.

Without a contemplative stage, productivity becomes sepa-

rate from self-expression. A product may be designed to please the teacher, for example, or to mimic what another child is doing. In contemplation there is an unconscious seeking for a form to represent a feeling inside the child that wishes to come out.

Creative activity needs some period of contemplation so that the proper methods for carrying out one's intentions and expressing one's inner leanings can be uncovered. Some children need more of this time and some less. Age and circumstances also influence the degree to which children will profit from a period in which they're free to think, imagine, fantasize, plan and conceptually organize a creative effort.

When being busy and getting something done are conditions of effective performance, those children who need slower and more developmental approaches to creative effort will be disadvantaged. Under such circumstances children "do" art as a curricular task rather than find ways to express themselves through art activities in a process of uncovering and understanding who they are.

Time to *think* is always at a premium in busy classrooms. Those who think faster and turn their thinking into timely action are the students teachers love to teach. But they are not always the most creative, nor are they the most in need of creative opportunities to feel good about themselves.

Enhancing creativity requires that there be more opportunities for contemplativeness in schools. Teachers themselves need more time to think and more occasions when they can use each other as stimuli to creative thinking about instruction. Opportunities for staff development, with a broad definition of what's permissible, need to be funded.

When children are given creative opportunities, the absence of productive results should not quickly be considered a sign of nonperformance. Children can be encouraged to think about what they are going to do before they do it. Times

when creative work is to be done should be preceded by transitions that include relaxing and visualizing. False starts should not be considered failures when they are experiments along the way as children discover what their inner voices are telling them.

Order Versus Spontaneity

Under most circumstances, the opposite of order is disorder, an anxiety-provoking state to be avoided. In a classroom, the opposite of order is spontaneity, a quality that can produce delight, satisfaction—and creativity. Schools can become so committed to order and orderliness that spontaneity is perceived as a threat.

Schedules, curriculum objectives, discipline methods, logic and administrative requirements can make spontaneity seem like an intrusion on the purposeful completion of academic tasks. There's much to be said for seeking order in schools. But too often in the process the playful, imaginative and spontaneous qualities of childhood are disregarded or squelched. Then the exuberant release of energies in a spontaneously satisfying activity is seen as a problem to be controlled, not a state to be nurtured and used in the service of creative development.

There is a general inclination in education to believe that children need to be controlled or things will quickly get out of hand. It's true, they will. It's one reason that controls remain persistent and become even more strict as children pass through the grades. Children who live in circumstances in which external controls are the norm tend not to internalize them, and a large percentage of children will resist them, overtly or covertly. Children's response to controls tends to justify their imposition, but this issue remains one of the biggest problems in education.

A significant percentage of misbehavior in schools is a

result of children seeking mental and emotional stimulation through creating spontaneous events that require new adaptations. "Let's see what will happen when..." is more often the cause of misbehavior than one might think. It is impersonal, not mean-spirited or designed to hurt someone. It is often spontaneous rather than considered and becomes a form of self-expression for children with low self-esteem.

In classrooms where spontaneity is a common experience, teachers teach children how to deal with the exuberant feelings that arise when something truly joyful and spontaneous occurs. Children learn how to channel and contain the release of energy into behavior that won't be sanctioned for being out of place. With persistent encouragement in this area, children learn how to internalize controls, since they learn that they must do this in order to reap the satisfaction from fun and playful school activities. They even tend to monitor each other's behavior more readily.

While activities designed to allow children to express themselves can be scheduled, self-expression doesn't lend itself so easily to timelines. It happens when children feel ready and when a gestation or incubation period for creative work has been passed through. Spontaneous opportunities for children to do creative work can capture these occasions when children are ready and eager to do imaginative work.

When teachers are in control with the support of the children, more activities can have a spontaneous flavor. This kind of control arises when teachers elicit agreement from children about the norms, standards, behavior and expectations in their classrooms. They earn this support as a result of being fair and straightforward, meeting children's emotional needs, having a stimulating and interesting program that children like to attend to, and understanding the variety of needs that children communicate to them.

Spontaneity then occurs more readily. Emergent learning

opportunities are captured. High energy, without excessive anxiety, seems to open channels for learning. Children's curiosity is stimulated rather than being deadened by predictable, repetitious activities. The energy of play becomes more readily available for learning, since the differences between learning and playing become less apparent.

All of this can only occur at some cost to order in the classroom and school environment. The cost is deemed too high in many schools, and thus opportunities for creative self-expression suffer. Teachers must ensure that their classrooms are not so noisy as to disturb others. They are enjoined to have logical reasons for doing what they do. "It seemed like it would be fun and interesting," cannot be used for long as a reason for spontaneous activities.

Teachers themselves vary in their need for order in their classrooms. Some are more naturally spontaneous; it's part of their personalities. But it is common for administrators to honor the needs of those teachers whose need for order is high, since the nature of administrative work is to organize, plan and orchestrate things in a logical and rational way. The needs of administration itself drive the inclination for order that is so apparent in American schools.

These factors contribute to the tendency to build and maintain order and diminish the experience of spontaneity. Since the encouragement of creative self-expression depends on general school and classroom climate as well as specific activities, the climate that order imposes places certain limits on creative work.

Extrinsic Versus Intrinsic Motivation

It is presumed that children have to be externally motivated in order to work. They don't have to be so motivated to play.

Since school is considered work, external motivations are built into it in many ways. From grades to gold stars, external motivation techniques are used to inculcate a work ethic in children. It seems to work a good part of the time, more often when it's done correctly, in accordance with children's needs, learning styles and capacities.

Creative self-expression is rarely motivated externally. It makes no sense to offer a child an external reward for something he or she is feeling good about doing. The feeling of satisfaction that results from being able to express one's essential Self is its own reward.

What is only touched on in much of the research on motivation is the way in which dependence on external motivations diminishes children's inclination to respond to their own internal motivations. In other words, children tend to stop an activity once they've received a reward for it. They tend to seek the promise of external rewards before undertaking challenges, the quid pro quo of schooling. When not being externally motivated, sanctioned or controlled, they tend to do little or nothing of significance. The hickory stick and the paddle have evolved into more subtle but equally stifling forms of motivation.

Creative activity inclines children to feel something positive from the work itself. All children have a need to be special, a need to express the Self in ways that will lead to acceptance rather than judgment. The satisfaction that comes from having given expression to the Self and been positively acknowledged for it seems to be reward enough. This is seen in children who are involved in creative classrooms, where they are constantly helped to find various ways to express their unique qualities. Children who have never had such a classroom experience will still seek external rewards when given the opportunity for creative expression. The need for extrinsic motivators remains

strong until the climate persistently and consistently presents children with alternative ways to feel good.

When teachers place excessive trust in external rewards to motivate children, they inadvertently diminish the likelihood that children will find satisfaction in creative, imaginative activities which don't offer external rewards. Creativity tends to wane in the face of external motivation. Children who compete for limited rewards will cease to do so if they see themselves as persistently losing out. Children who suffer from excessive negative judgments will not expose themselves to possible criticism.

This is often the case with children who are doing poorly in school or who require various remedial programs. These children are often seen as less creative and imaginative, as well as less bright and successful. But remedial programs are rife with external motivators and it's hard to say what is affecting what. Some teachers have found that youngsters in special education programs will become more avid learners when creative opportunities consistently are used instead of external rewards.

The problem with promoting internal motivation in schools is that adults want children to be motivated to do things the adults want done. Children who seem to be so motivated are stars and are often labeled as being interested in learning for its own sake. Children who are motivated about other things are dismissed, no matter how strong their curiosity or drive to learn the things that interest them.

The idea of a learning curve is relevant here. We've all seen the Curve of Normal Distribution in many books of statistics and information about children's learning. It shows that for any measurable characteristic, the scores will appear as a familiar and predictable curvilinear distribution if there are enough individuals being measured. Some small percentage will have high scores, some small percentage will have low ones, and the

mass of scores will be clustered around the mean or average score in a predictable way.

This way of thinking about children's learning is widespread. And it's true that for any *measurable* characteristic the distribution of scores will have a predictable curve. It's therefore assumed that some children will do very well and some very poorly at any given task. But the activities that lend themselves to creative self-expression often aren't easily measured.

The Curve of Normal Distribution may be a more accurate measure of children's motivation than of their capabilities. Some adventurous teachers have made excellence a standard; all children are expected to do all the work well, and more often than not, they all do. Children who do poorly can be helped to do better through coaching and training. A normal distribution curve cannot predict where any particular child will fall along it. It cannot deal with unique qualities, only those held in common by the group being measured. It becomes irrelevant if all children are expected to meet a very high standard.

How does the above argument bear on creativity and motivation? Well, when the standard for excellence in creative expression is that children should experience satisfaction from what they do, then measuring their results against each other or against some standard becomes moot. Children don't need to be externally motivated to achieve such satisfaction; the very process in which they're engaged provides its own motivation—namely, the way they feel about what they're doing.

"Art for art's sake" is another way to say that creative people do what they do because doing it make them feel good. It's not an abstraction, it's a real experience. Encouraging children to be creative requires focusing on intrinsic rewards and requires a radical reevaluation of extrinsic ones.

This chapter has reviewed a number of the barriers to helping children achieve free expression of their creative Selves that exist in most schools. These barriers have a special effect on children's self-esteem.

But the barriers to creativity also reflect other issues and needs that must be addressed in the learning environment—the curriculum, social adjustment, assessment, industriousness. So rather than think about how to break down the barriers, alternatives that increase the opportunities for creativity without sacrificing other important goals of the learning environment must be sought. This requires teachers to find the balance that best suits their own teaching styles and the needs of the children in their classrooms.

Chapter

2 The Elements of a Creative Classroom

Each of the elements discussed in this chapter is associated in a fundamental way with the definition of creativity used in this book. Many of these factors involve issues that lie at the core of teachers' styles and philosophies. Your views on each of these elements will have a profound effect on the creative climate of your classroom:

- Play, humor and fun
- Divergent thinking and creative problem solving
- Spontaneity, novelty and curiosity
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Imagination and imagining
- Reverie and daydreaming
- Privacy, isolation and withdrawl
- Learning, training and discipline
- Creativity and learning

The questions that follow the discussion of each element

will help you evaluate the current climate for creativity in your classroom and explore ways to raise the number of creative opportunities for your students.

Play, Humor and Fun

A teacher who uses creativity as a fundamental process in the classroom understands that children need to play in order to learn to work, that doing things that are fun enables children to do things that are serious, and that humor is an essential component in building an effective and satisfying learning environment.

There is little question that play is the real work of childhood. Play provides early learning of skills and attitudes that contribute to adult roles and vocations. Schools, however, tend to hold onto outdated notions about a conflict between work and play in childhood.

In free play, children operate from their feelings, but they also use the methods, materials, norms and values of their society to create fanciful representations of real world phenomena. A stick becomes a gun, a child becomes a mother, people change roles and behavior in the service of the things that children practice when playing. The limits of fantasy are only the imaginations of the players. Children are able to deal with truths in fantastic ways and to bend fantasy to make it true. In so doing they bring their fears, fantasies, wishes, hopes, dreams and longings to the surface, expressing them in symbolic behavior.

Play has important ramifications for children's mental health and is the natural arena for the emergence of creativity. In playing, children express their Selves in real and symbolic formats, trying out roles and capabilities that they aren't yet able to manifest in reality.

Play is the outpouring of things within the child. Learning, on the other hand can be thought of as the inputting of things. In most school settings, these two processes seem to be in conflict with each other: "It's time to stop playing now and get down to work, children." Recess (play) is the reward for working hard.

Creativity needs an atmosphere more like play than work to prosper. Humor, fun and a playful atmosphere are associated with safety for children. This is the main reason they need to be part of the classroom and school climate if creativity is to flourish.

For children to express their Selves in ways that are satisfying to them, they need to feel safe, since the exposure of Self leaves them vulnerable to criticism, shame and potential embarrassment. Creativity doesn't appear on demand. All children must reach their own thresholds of safety before they will permit themselves creative self-expression.

It's not possible to think about play that isn't fun, if you're a child. If something isn't fun, it doesn't make any difference that adults think it's play. Creative play and playful creativity only occur if children are having fun. Fun is almost always associated with humor, laughter and good spirits. Play, humor and fun are inextricably tied together in children's experience. A classroom that encourages children to be creative will be characterized by laughter, humor, fun and play—all happening with the intention to make children feel safe enough to express themselves.

To help you incorporate play, humor and fun into your classroom, think about these questions:

- What distinctions do you make between play and work in your classroom?
- How do children feel about work after they've been playing? Does playing contribute to their willingness to work?

- How do you go about introducing playful elements into the work you expect children to do?
- How do you go about having fun in your own classroom and in what ways do you allow and encourage children to have fun?

Divergent Thinking and Creative Problem Solving

Divergent thinking and creative problem solving are concepts that have been associated with enhancing creativity for many years. Some educators believe creativity can only be introduced into the regular curriculum through these processes. This is because these processes are closely associated with the intellectual and cognitive processes that schooling is supposed to promote.

Divergent thinking is a phrase that was coined many years ago to connect the mystery of creativity with the more measurable features of cognitive process. Researchers thought that if people could come up with ideas that were unconventional, unexpected and not based on simple logic, they were ideas that arose from a creative process.

Divergent thinking applied to problem solving was a way to make creativity seem to have practical value in schools and businesses. Seminars to enhance divergent thinking abounded. Brainstorming and other methods for disabling convergent thinking were, and still are, used in many quarters. One typical exercise that symbolizes this process is to have people think of the different ways a brick can be used. Real divergent thinkers will come up with quite unusual ideas.

But there are some problems associated with making divergent thinking and creative problem solving too important in elementary and middle schools. Many children need to

become more comfortable with their own creative styles before they will feel comfortable in applying the creative process to more academic areas. Learning to express one's essential Self is more fundamental to young children than problem solving. Furthermore, this approach places a very high premium on intellectual, and thus academic, processes. Bright children who can think quickly are thought to have an advantage. It's hard to tell whether someone has *learned* to be divergent in thought, as opposed to having it as an innate capacity. People who have been through drought conditions are more likely to know you can use a brick in the toilet to save water than those who haven't.

Problem solving is one application of creative thinking, but not the only one by far. Some of the most notable creative achievements have nothing to do with problems, only with the need of the creator to express something. Even creative people can be quite conventional and conservative in parts of their lives that don't bear on their creative work. Children's play may be designed, overall, to solve some problems of childhood, but it doesn't feel like problem solving to children when they're playing.

Children not only vary in their ability to think divergently, but also vary in regard to the topics they can think divergently about. Children who come from homes where divergent thinking is accepted and supported will invariably do better at it than children who don't. Whether children think divergently and are creative problem solvers depends more on their background and opportunities than on innate ability. Most children haven't experienced classrooms that tolerate odd and unusual ideas or solutions to problems.

Here are some questions to consider:

- How do you relate creativity and intelligence in your educational thinking? Do you expect creative children to be brighter, and brighter children to be more creative?

- Are there children in your classroom who are struggling academically but have shown some creative characteristics? Are there children in your classroom who are quite advanced academically but aren't very innovative or adventurous?
- What kinds of problems do you give children to solve?
- How often do you give assignments in which there are no right answers, just imaginative ones? Are there opportunities to do this more often?

Spontaneity, Novelty and Curiosity

It's hard to imagine a creative classroom that doesn't hold spontaneity, novelty and curiosity in high regard. These qualities always seem to be present when creativity is happening. They are associated with each other because they naturally follow from each other.

Curiosity is often the most valued attribute because it seems to have something to do with motivation in learning. Most adults, and thus most teachers, prefer that children limit curiosity to areas that are noncontroversial and nonthreatening. If first graders, for example, get too aggressively curious about adult sexual behavior, things can get tense very quickly in a classroom.

But in most instances teachers attempt to use children's curiosity as a way to motivate them, maintain their attention, and engage them more avidly in learning tasks. Children who ask pertinent questions and show enthusiastic interest in something are their teachers' joy. It's the bane of many educators that so many children don't seem very curious about things that are being done in school. This will only change when curiosity is supported by the teacher's willingness to be spontaneous in its

pursuit and to place a high value on novelty, seeking unusual experiences for his or her class.

Spontaneity is a quality that is quite consistent with childhood, before patience, persistence, resignation and tenacity become virtues of adult life. Curiosity that isn't satisfied quickly wanes, and other enthusiasms take its place. Teachers have to jump on children's curiosity, and do it in novel ways, as the following example shows.

A teacher was writing out instructions on the board to his fourth grade students. Inadvertently he misspelled a word. Several students quickly pointed out his error, a rare and novel thing. He looked at the word carefully, turned to the class and said, "You're wrong. It's spelled correctly."

Several of his more forthright students insisted he was wrong. In short order there was a fairly loud pseudo-argument occurring between the teacher and most of the class. Finally he said, "Prove it! I think you're wrong."

Almost every student stormed over to the shelf of dictionaries, tore one off and rushed to be the first to show him his error. As dictionaries were thrust in his face, the teacher carefully and slowly looked at them. The class quieted down. Then the teacher suddenly looked up and said with a smile, "The dictionary's wrong!" With hisses and boos and boisterous laughter following him, he went to the board and corrected the misspelled word. The lesson went on.

This teacher understood how creativity can become an element in everyday actions to make them fun and challenging.

To help you support and take full advantage of children's curiosity, think about these questions:

- In what ways do you permit yourself to be spontaneous, departing from plan to take advantage of an unforeseen educational opportunity?
- In what ways do you stimulate children's curiosity, take

advantage of what's already there, and combat the disinterested attitude that so many children seem to have?

- In what ways do you allow yourself to be "outrageous" in order to capture children's attention and keep them on their toes?
- In what ways do you use novel and unusual devices to create enthusiasm and maintain a climate of spontaneity in your classroom?

Tolerance for Ambiguity

Tolerance for ambiguity has a nice ring to it. It's ambiguous enough to prove itself, so to speak. But in the growth of children from concrete to abstract thinking, if you're a follower of Piaget, having children become more capable of handling ambiguity without anxiety is an important developmental process. It also has everything to do with promoting creativity in children.

Fantasy play is a process by which children take something concrete (say, a bed sheet), transform it through imagination into an ambiguous abstraction (it becomes a ball gown), and then treat the abstraction as if it were concrete (build a whole scenario of action around being at the ball). Children move in and out of concreteness and abstraction as they play. Fears, anxieties and other dysfunctional emotions tend to constrict their ability to handle ambiguous abstractions. Healthy children have a high tolerance for ambiguity as they play.

Helping children maintain a tolerance for ambiguity means that they have to come to understand that everything is not black and white and that there is not always a specific answer to everything. The "right" answer is the goal toward which so much of school activity is directed. There is usually one right answer. All others are wrong. This leaves little room for

idiosyncratic observations or analysis. As distinct from most schoolwork, creative products are by their nature ambiguous.

Whether something is satisfying to the creator and the audience is a matter of taste. Whether one has "hit the mark" in what he or she is trying to create is a matter of standards and judgment. Creativity is a relative business. In order for children to be persistently motivated to be creative, they have to be able to tolerate the ambiguities associated with the creative product.

Classroom discussions that permit children to voice opinions are a good way to show children that there isn't a right answer for some things. Emphasizing individual differences points out that not everything being the same is OK. Finding opportunities to show that the uncertainties of life are acceptable is a good overall strategy for building children's tolerance for ambiguity.

It should be mentioned here that maintaining a balance in children's tolerance for ambiguity is important. There are some areas where only the right answer will do. Creating ambiguity where it's not relevant or useful promotes anxiety in some children. Younger children are naturally less tolerant of some kinds of ambiguity than older children. Too much ambiguity tends to demotivate both children and adults from persisting in a task. But gradually increasing children's tolerance in this area, consistent with their developmental stage and educational levels, is a good way to promote creativity.

To ensure a place for ambiguity in your classroom, think about these questions:

- How do you go about managing ambiguity in your teaching methods so that you stimulate thinking and attention but don't go so far as to create anxiety?
- Do you differentiate children in your classroom according to their tolerance for ambiguity? Are there different

groupings? Do you adjust your teaching methods for this factor in children?

- After watching children in creative, unmanaged play, do you consider the ways they employed ambiguity in the service of creativity?
- When children become uncomfortable because of ambiguity, wanting to know the "right" answer when there isn't one, do you become uncomfortable and try to resolve their discomfort?

Imagination and Imagining

Imagination is so essential to creativity that we don't often think about it. It's accepted as a given. But in reality, it's necessary to have clear, conscious support for imagination in a classroom that proposes to nurture creativity. Many schools and classrooms are more directed to making children "realistic" than to encouraging their imaginations.

Imagination is a mystery, plain and simple. Though we have theories about how it happens, within all the axons, dendrites and synapses of the brain, something quite magical occurs. Things that never were come into consciousness, images of things not real spontaneously arise, visions of things out of time occur, and people endlessly entertain themselves and others with their imaginings.

Some people seem better at imagining than others; we don't know if this is due to the function of the brain or merely to their willingness to report what the brain is doing. I tend to support the latter notion, since imagining, like dreaming, seems to go on no matter what a person intends; some people are just better at reporting it than others.

The difference between imagination and creativity is that one is a purely internal process, while the other must be

expressed through some medium (including the voice) in ways that communicate to others. When children in your classes sit still, staring off into the distance, oblivious to what you're saying, they are usually firmly rooted in their imaginations. I call it "going to the movies in your head." This kind of activity needs to be channeled so that children learn to respect imagination and use it in the service of creative activity. Children who are given a wide arena for imagining seem, generally, to be able to focus their attention on learning tasks when called on to do so.

It's not necessary to stimulate children's imaginations. The brain takes care of that quite nicely. But it is necessary to provide many opportunities, varied resources, and a motivating context for imagination to find a creative outlet for expression. When these factors are not present, imagination turns inward, children withdraw more often, and the evidence of their healthy imaginings is not apparent. An environment that enhances self-esteem provides the safety and support for imagination to come forth.

When children are taught in a supportive context, the dark side of imagination can also be dealt with. This includes the fears, anxieties, terrors, pains and hurts that children have experienced and project into their current and future activities. Fear of failure, for example, is not a result of past failures but of past criticism of supposed failures. Imagination takes those painful emotional experiences and creates illusionary scenarios which act to stop children from trying things in areas where they could otherwise easily be successful. Contexts which support the expression of imagination in creative ways allow children to express such dark imaginings, subject these visions to rational scrutiny or cathartic expression, and revise their imagined futures.

Creative activity can be used to permit children to experience the revision of fears and anxieties into experiences that

result in satisfaction for them. You can't overcome fears without imagining yourself doing so. Encouraging children to imagine has deeper meaning than can be contained in simple art projects.

Allowing children to give creative expression to the dark side of their imaginations is likely to be quite helpful for them. This is one advantage of enhancing creative opportunities—they can be therapeutic without being "therapy." All children have fears, anxieties and painful experiences with which they're dealing. Not being able to give expression to them creates the occasion for explosive acting out of those feelings. Creative opportunities act like a pressure relief valve in giving children an opportunity to communicate about these painful feelings.

Some teachers are reluctant to give children free expression for fear that such problems will be expressed and children won't be able to handle them. This is less likely to happen when children feel safe, sense your acceptance of them just the way they are, and know that they are in a supportive classroom.

It isn't necessary for a teacher to be specially trained in dealing with children's emotional problems when the issue is creative self-expression. Since the best response to what children portray of their inner struggles is calm acceptance and a nonjudgmental approach, the same response that you'd give to any child's creative work is called for.

To help you provide a motivating context for imagination to be expressed creatively, think about these questions:

- How do you give children the opportunity for unrestricted and nonjudgmental exercise of their imaginations in your classroom?
- What resources are available in your classroom that permit children a variety of ways to express their imaginations?

- How do you encourage children to express their negative or fearful imaginings, especially those having to do with failure or shaming at school, so that they can begin to deal with these fears more objectively?

Reverie and Daydreaming

People who have been notably creative often report that they spend much time daydreaming, and even work while in an emotional state that could be called reverie. *Reverie* is a word that has its roots in older words meaning "to wander" or "to be delirious." Reverie and daydreaming are rather like a state of delirium—an altered state, but something most people do much more than they are aware. Children are in that state quite a bit.

Creativity can't happen without such a state. Early researchers in creativity called it a state of incubation of an idea or product, the stage where the mind wanders around inside itself, looking for a way to express something only vaguely understood. Daydreaming is closely associated with imagining and imagination, but is less organized and structured.

Structured daydreaming seems like a paradoxical notion, since daydreaming is apparently aimless and purposeless mental activity. But teachers can find ways to help children use their daydreams and reverie states in useful ways. Daydreaming is actually very purposeful; children wouldn't engage in it so much if it didn't have importance.

Daydreaming is something like sleep dreaming in that it seems to serve some useful physiological purpose. Sleep research shows that people need to do a minimal amount of dreaming in order to make the best use of sleep. Dreaming happens whether we wish it or not. Daydreaming is also

similar to sleep in that many children slip into it automatically when they are bored or anxious.

A problem with daydreaming in the classroom is that it draws children's attention away from what the teacher may want them to learn. Some children, for example, aren't allowed to sit near the windows since they spend so much time staring out of them in reverie about something. In fact, children's daydreaming is often far more constrained than that of most adults.

Adults doodle frequently; children in financially strapped classrooms are enjoined not to waste paper. Adults wander around their offices, visiting the water cooler or coffee pot freely, finding many opportunities to slip into reverie during the workday; children's time at school is highly structured. Adults often can work alone, taking time between moments of action to let their minds wander around the edges of a project they're working on; children work in groups that require their active attention to group processes.

Children's daydreams and reverie states are part and parcel of their creative instincts. Individual styles and temperaments result in different approaches; some children need to stare off into the distance without distraction, other children keep part of their mind in reverie while using another part to get work done. Observing different children to understand how they go about daydreaming in school is a fascinating project for a teacher.

If you start creative activities with a quiet period, allowing children's minds to retreat from the linearity of learning into the "delirium" of creative imagining, you'll find that their creative productivity goes way up. Don't be so quick to bring children back to "reality" when you find them in reverie; and when they return (they always do), ask them where they've been! Encourage daydreaming through relaxation exercises and visualization warm-ups, even when beginning academic ac-

tivities. If daydreaming and reverie states are ways for children to relax and reduce anxiety, they have more relevance to learning than we have supposed in the past.

Consider the following questions in relation to daydreaming and reverie in your classroom:

- Are there children in your classroom who seem to spend a good deal of time daydreaming? Who are they? Do they seem to have special creative inclinations?
- Can you experiment with creative visualization and relaxation exercises before academic activities? Alternate times you use them and don't use them, to see if there's a difference in performance.
- Could you use background music during quiet activities, or when wishing to calm the classroom after recess or lunch?

Privacy, Isolation and Withdrawal

Highly creative people have more than a high tolerance for being alone—they seem to have a great need for it. We don't know whether people who are innately loners tend to be more creative, or whether people who are creative develop the capability of being alone. Classrooms are very crowded places, relatively speaking, and their very structure would seem to make it hard to do creative work that requires isolation.

Many children seek isolation or privacy, even in the classroom. This may result in their emotional or psychological withdrawal. While such withdrawal may be considered a problem by teachers and parents, it may actually be evidence of a need for time and space for creative work. When creativity is a high priority for a teacher, finding ways to support children's need for privacy and isolation can become a problem.

The classroom is a very social place, and the best learning seems to go on within a cooperative learning environment. Even though there are distinct advantages to such classroom strategies in learning, they may not be as useful for encouraging individual creative work.

When children are unable to find physical privacy, they will automatically search for mental privacy by withdrawing into themselves or entering a state of daydreaming or reverie. Children show how adaptable they are by creating an atmosphere of isolation around themselves. Many children have a profound capacity for focusing and avoiding distractions while engaged in something that has grabbed their interest. Others can learn to work alone if taught to and supported while they learn to do so.

We are very concerned that children develop social skills that will enable them to interact and work effectively with others in school and as preparation for work. We don't think of working alone as a skill that should be developed or practiced or as something that some children need, especially those who are easily distracted. It's true that children are often enjoined to work alone—"Everybody do your own work"—but that injunction is usually intended to keep children from "cheating" by helping each other.

Learning to work alone as a way to allow one's inner Self to rise to the surface of consciousness, manifest itself through some medium, and result in a creative act is a very different thing. It's a necessary step in the development of children's ability to listen to themselves, sense what their imaginations are telling them, and sort out what their unique "voice" is seeking to say. This kind of working alone needs to be encouraged in classrooms devoted to creative expression.

The following questions will help you think about privacy in the classroom:

- How can you allow children who seem to need it to have some privacy in the classroom?
- Are there children in your classroom who seem to be loners, withdrawn, or spend a good deal of time by themselves? Can you distinguish between children who like to be alone and those who have problems interacting with peers?
- How do you feel about children who are not highly sociable? How are your feelings about them related to your life experience? Do children who need privacy or isolation make you uncomfortable?

Learning, Training and Discipline

Learning, training and discipline are important so that the messenger, the message and the medium through which the creative message is being conveyed are raised to the highest level of excellence possible. The most creative people are usually masters of the technical aspects of their medium.

The place of technical and intellectual discipline in creative work becomes confused in schools. Too often teaching a method for expressing creativity, such as painting, music or writing, takes the place of bringing creativity into the curriculum. Too often the way children are taught to use such media is conventional, impersonal, conformist and irrelevant to their need for self-expression. Learning, training and discipline are important features of a program to enhance creativity. But these things alone aren't sufficient to allow children the freedom of creative expression; in fact they may undermine it.

Whenever anything is taught in schools, whether arithmetic or craftwork, there is an urge to assess whether children have learned what's being taught and to judge their products. In

arithmetic it's the number right on a quiz; in arts or crafts it's the degree to which children's work compares to a standard.

Such judgment and comparison can be the death knell for creative effort in those children who are highly vulnerable to being judged. Such judgments and comparisons incline many children who wish to do well to conform their efforts to what they think adults are seeking from them. This is another way to extinguish self-expression.

Placing emphasis on teaching children skills, especially those that may be used in creative effort, always has some risk attached. Being able to mix paints to get the colors you want, learning to draw animal figures, being able to cut a straight line with scissors, sawing a board safely, learning to project one's voice when reciting or being in a play, learning to punctuate a sentence properly in order to get your meaning across—all of these are useful skills, but they must not be made a measure of creativity.

Measuring these skills to differentiate children according to supposed creative ability means that those who are "better" at a creative skill because of physical maturation, size, family background or prior experience are thought to be more creative when, in fact, they are just more skillful. Children who may have high creative potential, not yet realized because of the foregoing factors (immaturity or lack of relevant experience, for example) tend to compare themselves to their more skillful peers, conclude they are lacking in whatever it takes, and prematurely give up the effort to find a way to express themselves in creative ways. An emphasis on skill building, training and disciplined control of a medium always carries this danger.

This doesn't mean children shouldn't be exposed to skill-building experiences in areas where creative self-expression may result. But judgment and comparisons have to be controlled. Teachers have to be vigilant that some children aren't

discounting themselves because of the way they compare themselves to their peers. Children's creative work needs to be freed from the skills they've been taught. "I won't grade for spelling or grammar on your stories. This time I want you to say anything you want any way you can."

Classrooms that encourage creative self-expression in children can include many opportunities for learning, training and the growth of disciplined effort, as long as attention to a skill does not overshadow acceptance of self-expression. The motive to create and the motive to become better at the medium in which one creates go hand in hand, even in childhood.

Think about these questions in relation to learning, training and discipline in your classroom:

- In which areas where creative self-expression is possible do you teach skills? Do you assess which children will benefit from which skills or presume that all children in the class should develop the same skill to a high level?
- To what degree do you reserve judgment (or not) when children are exercising creative self-expression? Remembering that praise is a judgment, are there times when you just let children do things without comment?
- In which areas do you feel comfortable (or not) about teaching skills for creative self-expression? Are there creative or artistic areas where you would benefit from more training that could be used to help children develop higher-level skills?

Creativity and Learning

Lest the previous section seem overly cautionary, suggesting that discipline in learning is somehow antithetical to creativity, let's look more closely at this topic.

There are many reasons why children don't learn as well as they might. One of the most important is that, for whatever reasons, children aren't motivated to engage in learning because they are dealing with personal emotional needs, and these needs are not fulfilled by what they're learning or the way they're being taught.

Children tend to exhibit discipline spontaneously in things that are important to them. A child who focuses attention on a game being played after school may be late for dinner. Expertise at a Nintendo game may not be highly valued by adults, but the time and effort that went into developing such expertise shouldn't be overlooked. Children learn very quickly when their needs energize their motivation. They can also be highly resistant to learning when they don't see the relevance of a skill to their current needs or interests.

Unfortunately schooling isn't relevant to many children's most pressing needs, nor is it a place in which they achieve much satisfaction. Many children have an adversarial attitude toward school that eventually results in their becoming only marginally involved in learning activities. This is true of all children to some degree, and of some children to a considerable degree.

Poverty, gender, ethnicity, abuse, disabilities and other factors contribute to this. But, ultimately, the child is the arbiter of what he or she is going to learn. Children prosper when they are in classrooms that understand their needs, actively seek to fulfill these needs, and do so in safe, nurturing and interesting atmospheres.

Encouraging children's creative self-expression is important because it engages children in activities that produce intrinsic satisfaction and allows them to explore, in safety, their own emotional and cognitive processes. Some early research in creativity and learning suggests there is a connection between creative expression and how much children will

learn. If there is a relationship between children liking to be at school and how much they learn, then more research in this area is certainly warranted.

But one of the obstacles to understanding this connection is that there has traditionally been a conceptual distinction between those activities that were considered creative and those that were defined as academic, despite the fact that some gifted teachers have persistently shown that teaching academic subjects in ways that allow children to be creative pays big learning dividends. Aligning children's need for self-expression and their need to learn is actually a relatively undeveloped area of instructional practice. It's thought that the outputting of creativity and the inputting of cognitive learning are too different to be combined. This isn't true.

These two seemingly divergent pursuits are both deeply linked to self-esteem. Self-esteem, considered and understood in a special way, becomes the unifying factor, the bridge between enhancing creativity and developing cognitive skills. The next chapter describes the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem, a model that will help you understand how the various aspects of self-esteem influence and are in turn influenced by children's capacity and need for creative self-expression.

Chapter

3 The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem: A Model

Before discussing the connection between creativity and self-esteem, it is important to give a general overview of self-esteem.

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is a distinctive approach to enhancing children's self-esteem. To understand how promoting creativity and enhancing self-esteem are related, you need to know the general outline of this model. This chapter will provide you with that outline.

General Self-Esteem Principles

There are a few basic assumptions we make in this book when we talk about self-esteem:

- Self-esteem is about feelings. It is basically unconscious and not reportable.
- Self-esteem is about feeling *satisfied.* When basic needs are fulfilled, one feels satisfied. Self-esteem work is about

understanding basic emotional needs, how they are expressed in school and how teachers can meet them and ensure that children are learning what they're supposed to.

- Self-esteem has an internal aspect—the set of feelings that children have inside themselves that influence how they respond to their experiences—and an external aspect—the factors in the environment that influence how children feel.
- The transactions between what is going on inside children and what is happening in their environment will determine how each child acts. This creates tremendous variation in how different children respond to the same experience.
- Children with high self-esteem respond differently to their environment (external factors) because their internal factors (their feelings) are different from those of children with low self-esteem.
- Children's self-esteem varies during the day and over longer periods of time based on developmental issues as well as persistent influences of their environment. This means that high self-esteem children can have their esteem lowered (even permanently) if things persistently go badly in the environment. It also means you can raise children's self-esteem if the environment is arranged to consistently have a positive effect on their feelings.
- It is important to distinguish self-esteem from self-concept so teachers don't have unrealistic expectations of changes in children's feelings or behavior that may undermine self-esteem rather than raise it.
- Patterns of behavior are more important than specific behaviors in understanding children's self-esteem.

- Self-esteem influences learning through the way in which children experience satisfaction from learning activities.
- Self-esteem influences social relationships, since children with low self-esteem depend on others for emotional support more than children with high self-esteem do.
- Self-esteem influences creativity through the degree of comfort children have in expressing their internal processes of imagination, fantasy and imagery.
- And, finally, self-esteem is a complex phenomenon, composed of relatively independent sub-factors that result in teachers needing to understand why different interventions work for some children but not for others.

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is the name we have given to four feelings that everyone experiences. These are the *Sense of Uniqueness*, the *Sense of Connectiveness*, the *Sense of Power* and the *Sense of Models*.

We use the term *Sense of* to acknowledge that these feelings are often generalized, pervasive, subtle and even unconscious. Feelings don't quite fit into the lexicon of emotions that our language provides. Feelings are usually rich, complex and hard to label. Each of the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is composed of many issues.

Children with high self-esteem feel each of these conditions frequently, in many different circumstances and with a high degree of intensity. Children with low self-esteem have difficulty feeling one or more of these conditions. They don't feel it very often, when and where they feel it is quite limited, or they don't feel it very intensely.

In a manner of speaking, feeling "bad" is the absence of a significant experience of one or more of these conditions. Persistently feeling bad is a sign of low self-esteem.

Raising self-esteem means that we help children feel all these conditions more often and more intensely, until they are able to feel the conditions without our doing something to them.

While these four conditions are feelings that children already have (internal factors), external factors can also influence feelings. You can design classroom experiences that affect specific conditions in children, and by doing so can control the emotional climate in your classroom more precisely.

The connection between creative self-expression and self-esteem is evident in the way children feel about their experience in school. Children with higher self-esteem will be able to demonstrate creative behavior more readily for a number of reasons:

- Children with higher self-esteem feel safer and less threatened in more situations than children with low self-esteem. Creativity prospers when children feel safer and more free to express themselves.
- Children with higher self-esteem feel they are able to influence adults more easily than children with low self-esteem. Creativity prospers when children can elicit positive recognition from adults for what they've produced.
- Children with higher self-esteem feel they're able to accomplish what they set out to do more than children with low self-esteem. When embarking on a creative process, where the end result is distant in time and success is ambiguous, having higher self-esteem allows children to stick with things.
- Children with higher self-esteem tend to be more goal oriented than children with low self-esteem. They can set tasks for themselves that are difficult, tasks that children

with low self-esteem won't undertake. Many creative projects are complex and hard to achieve.

All of the conditions of self-esteem serve to support creativity, although the Sense of Uniqueness is the central one. The following material gives a brief overview of the four conditions.

The Sense of Uniqueness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must acknowledge and respect the qualities and characteristics about themselves that are special and different, and they must receive confirmation from other people that those qualities and characteristics are important and good.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness:

- Feel there is something special about themselves.
- Feel they know things or can do things that no one else knows or can do.
- Know that other people think they are special.
- Are able to express themselves in their own unique way.
- Feel creative and imaginative and have opportunities to safely express their creativity.
- Feel respect for themselves.
- Are able to enjoy feeling different or unusual.
- Feel they are being affirmed for what they *are* rather than being judged for what they are not.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Uniqueness is enhanced. This happens when one or more of the following things occur:

- Children are helped to understand what makes them special (e.g., personal characteristics, skills, affiliations, achievements).

- They are given a wide variety of opportunities to express themselves through a variety of methods (e.g., writing, speaking, drawing, dancing). The greater the variety, the more likely children will find a satisfying avenue for self-expression.
- They are praised for the things they value about themselves, not only the things adults value about them (e.g., a child may feel that athleticism is more important than intellect, even if the child is at the top of the class academically).
- They are not shamed for characteristics over which they have little or no control (e.g., size, looks, ethnicity, gender, their family's lack of affluence).
- They are helped to see that a combination of characteristics makes them special and different (e.g., just being a girl isn't special, just being big isn't special, and just being a catcher is only a little special—but being a girl catcher on a little league team, big enough to stop runners, is *really* special).
- The environment provides positive recognition for a broad array of personal attributes, not simply a narrow range of accomplishments (e.g., children are affirmed not only for high grades, athletic prowess or money earned but for being honest, forthright or persistent).

The Sense of Uniqueness is the key condition in the area of creativity. The higher the Sense of Uniqueness, the more likely that children will demonstrate their imaginative internal processes. Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness delight in expressing themselves and in the reception their creative efforts receive from others.

When the Sense of Uniqueness is low, children are reluctant to express what's inside themselves for fear of being criticized,

shamed or embarrassed. This doesn't mean that they have lower creative potential, only that they are afraid to express it.

Since creativity is known by its products (painting, poems, constructions and imaginative solutions to complex problems), it's often presumed that the absence of such products, the evidence of self-expression, denotes the absence of the internal processes that could produce those products.

However, if we approach this question from the viewpoint of self-esteem and the Sense of Uniqueness, we conclude that this is not the case. Imagination, fantasy, mental imagery, and the wishes, hopes and desires that fuel them, are present in all children. Children's Sense of Uniqueness and overall level of self-esteem determines the degree to which they are able to express their internal creative processes.

The Sense of Connectiveness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must be able to gain satisfaction from the people, places and things that they feel connected to, and the value of those connections must be acknowledged by the people who are important to them.

Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness:

- Feel they are a part of something.
- Feel related in important ways to specific people, places or things.
- Identify with a group of people.
- Feel connected to a past or heritage.
- Feel that something important belongs to them (feel a sense of ownership).
- Feel they belong to something or someone.
- Feel good about the things that they feel part of (feel satisfied).

- Know the people or things they feel connected to are thought well of by others.
- Feel they are important to others.
- Feel comfortable with their bodies and trust them to work well (feel connected to themselves).

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Connectiveness is enhanced. This happens when the following conditions are met in the children's environment:

- They have a large number of important connections with people, places and things they value (e.g., friends, family, toys and books, "special" places around the home or neighborhood).
- They experience a significant degree of satisfaction from their connections (i.e., they experience positive feelings, such as love, goodwill, fun, joy, safety or excitement, from their connections more often than negative feelings).
- The people and things children feel connected to are acknowledged as valuable by other people.

The higher children's Sense of Connectiveness, the more likely they are to exhibit skills associated with interpersonal relations. Thus, children with high Connectiveness may show their creative side in how they relate to people, finding ways to creatively demonstrate understanding, compassion and generosity. They may also have a strong inclination to use their creativity to help others.

In addition they are inclined to use the material of human relations as the content of their creative work. They will draw a country scene in which people are doing something fun. They will write a story about something that makes people happy, especially as a result of good relationships. They will

want to be the "nice" character in the class play, the one who makes the others feel good.

Children with a low Sense of Connectiveness will be reluctant to engage in group activities associated with creative work and will not easily share their feelings directly in verbal ways. They are more likely to use creative media which allow them to work alone (drawing, carving, writing in a journal), and they will be reluctant to allow their products to be displayed publicly, unless they feel very safe.

The Sense of Power

In order to have high self-esteem, children need to have the competence do what they must, the resources required to effectively express their competence, and the opportunity to use their competence to influence important circumstances of their lives.

Children with a high Sense of Power:

- Believe they can do what they set out to do.
- Feel confident they can handle, one way or another, what is put before them to do, including things that might be risky or challenging.
- Know they can get what they need to do what they have to do.
- Feel they are in charge of their own lives, overall, despite having to depend on others some of the time.
- Feel comfortable when they have a responsibility to fulfill.
- Feel others can't make them do things that they really don't want to do.
- Feel confident they can make the decisions they need to in order to solve the problems they're faced with.

- Know they're not going to lose control of themselves despite pressures they may experience.
- Are able to use the skills they have in situations calling for them, and are comfortable about acquiring new skills.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Power is enhanced. This happens under the following conditions:

- They are given the resources needed to meet important objectives in their lives (e.g., having even a small allowance allows children to make some important decisions).
- They are given many ways to exercise a Sense of Power, from being able to manipulate tools and other material resources (external factors) to controlling their emotions and solving problems (internal factors). The more ways children have to exercise their Sense of Power, the greater their feeling of control.
- They have the opportunity to use what they know and do well. This is the main strategy used to *maintain* the Sense of Power.
- They are allowed to make all the decisions they are capable of making successfully, even if they resist doing so. This is the main strategy used to *build* the Sense of Power.
- They have a sense of physical and emotional safety.

The more competences that children have and the more skillful they are at using them, the more confident they can be in meeting new circumstances (e.g., children who know how to ride the bus and deal with strangers can profit from greater mobility). Children who have an adequate sense of Power have less need to control or manipulate others. Bullying, acting manipulative, avoiding challenges, being irresponsible and

having disabling fears are all signs of a diminished Sense of Power.

The Sense of Power makes an important contribution to creativity in children because it gives them the assertiveness and feeling of control so important to taking action in creative self-expression. Children with a high Sense of Power are capable of working long and hard on a creative project with the intention of seeing it through to successful completion. High Power children are persistent because they assume they will be successful in the end.

Children with a high Sense of Power like to see concrete results from their efforts, so they will be producers. Even if the quality of their work is not high, they will keep at things until they satisfy themselves they've done what's needed. Their assertive Selves select bold and demonstrative media and methods for expressing their imagination and fantasy. They like bright, unmuted colors, large constructions, big sheets of drawing paper, and complex models.

The Sense of Models

In order to have high self-esteem, children must be able to refer to human, philosophical and operational models to help them make sense of the world. They use these reference points to help them set their own goals, values, personal standards and ideals.

Children with a high Sense of Models:

- Know people they feel are worthy of being emulated.
- Feel confident they can tell right from wrong and good from bad.
- Have consistent values and beliefs guiding and directing their actions in different situations.
- Can depend on prior experiences to help them avoid being intimidated by new ones.

- Feel a sense of purpose and know, more or less, where they're headed.
- Are able to make sense of what's going on in their lives and of the circumstances in which they find themselves.
- Know the standards that are being used to judge them, and have a sense of their own standards.
- Know how to go about learning what they need to know.
- Have a sense of order that enables them to organize their environment in order to accomplish their tasks.
- Experience satisfaction from intellectual activity itself, regardless of content.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Models is enhanced. This happens when the following conditions are met:

- Children have adequate *human models* in their lives. Human models are people whom children elect to emulate. If, by mimicking or emulating these models, children are successful in the things they must do, then the human models are *adequate*. These human models may be literary, mythical or historical figures, as well as real people in children's experience.
- Children have adequate *philosophical models* in their lives. Philosophical models are the sets of ideas and beliefs that guide and influence children's behavior. To the extent that these models help children succeed in what they must do, they are *adequate* models. Ethical and moral principles that children hear being espoused and see being practiced influence the way they make choices and decisions about ethical matters.
- Children have adequate *operation models* in their lives.

> Operational models are the array of mental constructs that consciously and unconsciously influence children's actions and performance. Good manners, social skills, and the whole array of normative, age-appropriate skills from tying shoes to flushing toilets fall into the category of operational models—things we learn to do without thinking about them. These models are learned and reinforced through children's experiences; they are learned through repetitive behavior. To the extent that children have a broad array of such models, they are helped to think clearly, act purposefully and be successful in what they have to do.

Children with a high Sense of Models are more likely to evidence creative behavior in ways that show a keen understanding of what they're trying to express, as well as a good grasp of skills in the medium they have selected.

Children with a high Sense of Models will write stories or draw pictures in which many details are clearly described. They will do something over again until they get it right and the product looks right, e.g., recopying a finished story on a neat, clean sheet of paper.

High Models children are well organized and purposeful in what they do. When engaged in creative work they are focused, careful and precise about what they're trying to communicate. They will be as concerned with the careful application of skills in the medium they've chosen as they are with what they're trying to express about themselves. They will have high standards for the products of their creativity.

The Three Arenas of Self-Esteem

There is another piece of the self-esteem puzzle you need to have. Children experience self-esteem in three arenas: the Personal Arena, the Interpersonal Arena, and the Group Arena.

Children experience their internal states—their feelings—in the Personal Arena. These internal feelings are unique combinations of the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem—Connectiveness, Uniqueness, Power and Models.

Children experience two kinds of external events that influence the way they feel. One kind of external event—direct one-to-one interaction—is called the Interpersonal Arena. There is another person at the other end of the children's one-to-one relationships. In your classroom, the most important other person is you.

The other external event is more general—experiences of group interaction that occur in classrooms, families, schools and other group and institutional settings. This is called the Group Arena. Group interactions are more than a collection of one-to-one relationships. In classrooms, group interactions include factors such as classroom climate, lessons and the variety of structured group activities that occur, as well as informal play, instruction and social groups.

Understanding self-esteem in terms of these three arenas is key to effectively increasing self-esteem in the classroom.

The Personal Arena

We infer children's feelings from their behavior. Thus, in the Personal Arena we focus on observing children and analyzing, from their behavior, what their particular self-esteem strengths and weaknesses are. This is important to do in order to select

appropriate self-esteem–building activities that will make a difference to an individual child or group of children.

Children who have low self-esteem behave differently from children who have high self-esteem. Some of the behavior is clear and obvious; some is subtle and requires persistent observation to see.

The behavior that expresses children's self-esteem is *patterned behavior.* There are characteristic patterned behaviors that represent highs and lows in each of the four conditions.

When children have low self-esteem, the problem usually centers on one of the four conditions. This condition is the *critical condition.* It must be handled in precise ways in order to achieve significant and persistent behavioral changes in the direction of higher self-esteem.

You have children in your classroom who, despite your efforts, are reluctant to permit their creativity to come out. Working in the Personal Arena will help you analyze which self-esteem condition may be blocking their willingness to express themselves creatively. It may be the Sense of Uniqueness. It may also be any of the other conditions, which may have special significance in a child's life.

Appendix A contains a Personal Arena Behavior Checklist for each of the four conditions. These checklists will help you identify and understand behavior associated with each condition. You can use the checklists to help determine which condition is a child's critical condition. The larger the number of index behaviors observed, and the greater the frequency or intensity of the behaviors, the greater the difficulty the child has with that particular condition of self-esteem.

The Interpersonal Arena

The Interpersonal arena is the arena where you communicate with a child one-to-one, using the approaches that work

best with children who have weaknesses in each of the four conditions.

What you say, how you say it, and when you say it has a powerful effect on children's self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem are much more sensitive to how they are treated than children with higher self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem react differently to their environment than children with higher self-esteem; they make different presumptions about the meaning of what you are doing or saying to them.

Each of the four conditions represents a different set of feelings. For example, children with a strong Sense of Connectiveness generally are more open, friendly, warm, trusting and convivial. Children with a poor Sense of Connectiveness will be shy, overly aggressive, poor communicators, distant and reluctant to respond fully to others. If you are trying to "connect" with these children, you will have to employ different tactics.

The key to making self-esteem interventions work with individual children is this: Strategies that enhance one condition of self-esteem do not necessarily work to enhance the others. You treat a child who has a low Sense of Connectiveness differently than you do one who has a low Sense of Power, if you wish to make a difference in how the child feels. Children who have blocks to creative self-expression don't all have the same problem. Your versatility in relating to them can release their creative potentials if you use the most appropriate methods.

Some children will need special attention from you in order to feel safe and comfortable in expressing themselves creatively. Many will not respond to activities you design without some special one-on-one interaction with you. Your behavior toward an individual child may be able to influence his or her willingness to undertake creative tasks.

Just as the behavior that represents a weakness in each

condition of self-esteem is patterned, there are special patterns of interaction that have different effects on children. The Interpersonal Arena offers a wide variety of things you can do to affect each condition. This is the arena where you have the most power to influence the self-esteem of individual children.

Teachers who are skillful at enhancing self-esteem in children are highly flexible in selecting ways to act with different children, depending on an individual child's special emotional needs. The four conditions model for self-esteem shows you how to assess what a child needs (Personal Arena) and how to select techniques that will have a powerful influence on children's feelings (Interpersonal Arena).

Appendix B contains a list of techniques and strategies for building each condition of self-esteem in the Interpersonal Arena.

The Group Arena

Most of children's school experience occurs in group situations. By group situation, we mean any time two or more individuals are engaged in an activity having a common objective for all of them. The group can be a small reading group of three or four children, a classroom, or an entire school.

The term *Group Arena* is used to mean anything influencing self-esteem that results from children's experience in any social system in which they participate. School experience is composed of many social systems through which every child must pass. Some pass through them comfortably, others with little or no satisfaction.

The Group Arena is where rules, procedures, norms, policies and other activities occurring in groups influence children's self-esteem. The activities that take place in your classroom influence the self-esteem of everyone in it, including yourself.

Certain things that go on in groups characteristically undermine or enhance the self-esteem of their members. If you understand how different group activities affect self-esteem, you can design activities to enhance self-esteem for all children in your class.

Classroom activities have a different effect on each of the four conditions, and different children have different self-esteem needs. An activity designed to raise children's Sense of Power may not have a significant effect on the Sense of Uniqueness. So a child with a poor Sense of Uniqueness may not benefit significantly from that activity.

Every teacher tends to emphasize some conditions of self-esteem more than others. Which ones are emphasized reflect the teacher's self-esteem, as well as important norms or values in the school.

For example, if you are a teacher who has a high Sense of Connectiveness (many teachers have high Connectiveness), you gain a good deal of satisfaction from interacting with others. You like to interact both frequently and intensively with children in your classroom because of this. As a result, you use classroom activities to increase the frequency and intensity with which children interact, because it gives you satisfaction to do so.

If you also have a low Sense of Power you will tend to do fewer things that increase children's Sense of Power, and you will find some children who are immune to your warm, loving nature. If you have a high Sense of Uniqueness you will enjoy children's spontaneous and unusual behavior and will stimulate it. If your Sense of Uniqueness is lower, such individualists may seem like problems to you.

When children have problems with one or more of the conditions, they respond favorably to activities that raise those conditions. If you design activities so that all aspects of self-esteem are attended to, all children will find opportunities in

your classroom to experience a high level of satisfaction, and their self-esteem will improve if it needs to.

The same principles applying to the Group Arena in the classroom apply to the school as a whole.

The Group Arena is the most significant arena for teachers, since much of what you do is devoted to constructing general processes that influence groups of children or the class climate. The Group Arena is particularly important when thinking about creativity because you need to find opportunities for individual creative expression within a group context. The Group Arena of the Sense of Uniqueness is of special importance; it will show you general strategies that can be used in a variety of different ways, so that the same overall strategy can result in many different activities. Your own imagination will generate alternatives.

Appendix C contains a list of techniques and strategies for building each condition of self-esteem in the Group Arena.

Review

There are four conditions of self-esteem:

- The Sense of Uniqueness
- The Sense of Connectiveness
- The Sense of Power
- The Sense of Models

There are three arenas in which we work with self-esteem issues:

- The Personal Arena
- The Interpersonal Arena
- The Group Arena

Combining the conditions and arenas will help us answer the following questions:

Conditions and Arenas

Condition	*Personal Arena*	*Interpersonal Arena*	*Group Arena*
Connectiveness	What does the child do that shows an ability to relate to people, places and things?	What can I do to improve the child's ability to relate more effectively and comfortably?	What can be done to improve the group's ability to have good relationships?
Uniqueness	How does the child show respect for his or her special characteristics?	What can I do to improve the child's self-image and self-respect?	What can be done to increase the group's capacity for creative self-expression?
Power	How does the child show control over his or her life and work?	What can I do to improve the child's skill, sense of responsibility and confidence?	What can be done to improve the group's ability to self-monitor and make good decisions?
Models	How does the child show the sense of order and purpose he or she feels in life?	What can I do to improve the child's under-standing and ability to learn?	What can be done to set standards and expectations for the group to achieve?

Chapter

4 Uniqueness, Self-Esteem and Creativity

Now that you have a general understanding of the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem and some of the ways they relate to creativity, we can more thoroughly explore how the model, and particularly the Sense of Uniqueness, applies to enhancing creativity for the children in your classroom.

Self-Expression and the Sense of Uniqueness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must acknowledge and respect the qualities and characteristics about themselves that are special and different, and they must receive confirmation from other people that those qualities and characteristics are important and good. This is the basic definition of how the Sense of Uniqueness works. The same fundamental principles govern creativity—that is, children must feel special and different and must be confirmed in those characteristics. They elicit this confirmation by creative effort, by showing in some way what makes them special and different.

This is the expression of Self. The Self consists of the various qualities and characteristics that make up the person. Self-expression is the way in which each child's uniqueness is communicated to others, the way the child makes his or her distinctive mark on the world. Creative self-expression is the process of using some medium in order to express and communicate the Self to others.

The "engine" for children's creative self-expression is the Sense of Uniqueness. Whether or not creativity is an inborn trait or the result of appropriate experiences, the Sense of Uniqueness will determine how children express their inner processes and what is observed about their creativity. There are several corollaries of this assertion:

- Creativity is enhanced by raising children's Sense of Uniqueness and *then* providing them with materials, opportunities and skills to express their Selves.
- There are a variety of ways to raise the Sense of Uniqueness (see Chapter 3 and the Appendixes). Teachers can use methods that aren't primarily literary or artistic.
- The ongoing experiences of children in school and in your classroom affect self-esteem constantly. The Sense of Uniqueness, as one condition of self-esteem, is similarly affected on a moment-to-moment basis. Enhancing creativity is a process that is ongoing, not limited to certain activities.
- Creative events happen continually for children with a high Sense of Uniqueness, since they take many opportunities to express themselves through whatever medium is available. To high Uniqueness children, the message is more important than the medium!
- Teachers need to broaden their ideas of what creative events are in order to be sensitive to children's self-expression.

When children have a high Sense of Uniqueness they mainly need opportunities to manifest their creative inclinations. The greater the number of different ways they have to express something about themselves and receive acknowledgment from significant adults, the happier they will be. For high Uniqueness children, the classroom that values creativity is comforting and stimulating.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness are comfortable expressing themselves, and are generally satisfied with the forms their self-expression takes. They also presume that others will appreciate what they've expressed and affirm that it is "good."

Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness are not comfortable expressing themselves because they believe their essential qualities are negative ones. They expect their efforts to be unappreciated and that they will be criticized or even shamed for expressing something "bad." These children might be quite competent in an art form, but unconsciously use the medium to express their fear, anger or hurt. The content of what they produce is dark or negative and they don't like what they see themselves expressing. They therefore disparage their product, even though it may have technical or artistic merit.

Their dislike of something about themselves makes them dislike how those Selves manifest in creative work. Yet they continue to express these negative characteristics because they feel that's who they are and that they can be no other way. Such children have a negative self-concept.

Self-Concept and Self-Expression

Self-concept is not the same as self-esteem. Self-concept is the set of ideas, beliefs and images that one holds about oneself. Self-esteem is the feeling one has about one's self-concept.

This distinction is important and is often overlooked. Self-concept is a cognitive process; self-esteem is a deeper, more emotional and more pervasive quality than self-concept. Self-concept is only one part of self-esteem, but it *is* closely related to the Sense of Uniqueness and, thus, to children's self-expression.

Children express themselves in positive ways when their self-concept is good. They express themselves in negative ways when it's not. The Self will find ways to be expressed, for better or for worse. When children have a low Sense of Uniqueness, which implies having a negative self-concept, their creativity is often expressed in the variety of ways they can find to misbehave! Such children may persistently act in ways that elicit criticism or punishment.

These children express some aspect of their negative self-concepts through behaving in ways that are inappropriate (e.g., acting foolishly and interrupting when other children are reciting), or by producing creative products that are inappropriate (e.g., expressing sexual anxieties through sexually explicit drawings in art class). The general response of teachers to either of these expressions is to restrict such children from further participation in the activity, or to establish conditions that put constraints on the way these children express themselves.

This creates quite a dilemma. Low Uniqueness children need opportunities for self-expression, for which they can receive approval, even more desperately than high Uniqueness children. If we restrict them or set boundaries as to what they can do, their needs are not met. But, at the same time, the integrity of the classroom and the sensibilities of other children and adults must be honored. How should such situations be handled?

There is no simple answer to this problem. But knowing how the Sense of Uniqueness works can provide some insights into it. Low Uniqueness children are giving clear signs they

need help; they need enhanced ways to express themselves that aren't likely to lead to criticism, shaming or punishment. You might, for example, give them a special role in an activity, such as assistant to the instructor in charge of handing out materials, while they decide how they are going to adjust their behavior to fit the norms of the activity.

Or you might engage them at some other time in discussion of how they can satisfy their need for self-expression while being part of the group activity. Even though they may have to be restricted, they can participate in planning how they can return to full participation in the group. Even children with low Uniqueness can be surprisingly innovative in finding solutions to their own most important problems. All children have the potential for demonstrating creative thinking if they receive support for doing so.

Low Uniqueness children are often as creative as high Uniqueness children, but their creativity emerges at the wrong time or in the wrong way! Such children may be very inventive about finding ways to act inappropriately, showing the same kind of divergent thinking, persistence and imagination as children with high self-esteem.

Raising the Sense of Uniqueness is the path to helping change the self-concept from negative to positive. When children *feel* better about themselves, they automatically begin to *think* about themselves in more positive ways. As this process occurs, their creative self-expression begins to come out in more positive ways. As children receive support for positive creative expression, they feel more comfortable and satisfied when expressing themselves.

But where do we begin in raising the Sense of Uniqueness? Paradoxically enough, we must first *affirm* the child's negative self-concept in order to lay the foundation for increased self-esteem.

The Paradox of Affirming the Negative Self-Concept

High Uniqueness children will express themselves in ways that elicit praise and approval. For example, a generally happy and upbeat child will use bright colors and positive themes in her drawings, showing how she really feels.

Low Uniqueness children do precisely the same thing. But they use the resources and opportunities presented to them to express their negative self-concepts, and the resulting behavior is also negative. Should they be affirmed for doing this? The answer is yes, but we need to look at what affirming them means.

If children are affirmed when they express something about themselves, they experience validation of what their self-concept is giving expression to. The self-concept is something that arises from experience—children don't choose it for themselves. What they have come to believe about themselves is true with respect to their experience even though it may not be true in fact!

An example of this is a child who feels incapable of being successful in school because her highly demanding parents are never quite satisfied with what she's done; they communicate in subtle and direct ways that she could always do better. This child may be quite bright and will demonstrate this from time to time. Yet, usually, at the brink of success she finds a way to fail, thereby confirming her negative self-concept. It's clear this bright child can do the work well enough to succeed, if she could overcome her beliefs about herself.

Even though the child's belief is "wrong" in that she is bright enough to succeed, the belief has validity in the light of her parents' continuing dissatisfaction and negative communications about her ability. This child has good reason for believing

she can't be successful; the most important people in her life are saying so!

Telling this child that she is capable and attempting to prove it to her are likely to meet with resistance. Her need to hold onto a consistent self-concept is stronger than her desire to think well of herself. Affirming such a child is a way of letting her know that her feelings about herself have validity, without communicating dissatisfaction toward her. There are three stages or levels of affirming children that can be used no matter how negative a child's self-concept might be.

Level I—Acknowledgment

"I see that you have finished your picture." Acknowledging a child is a powerful, although seemingly simple, method to let children know they've made an impression. Low Uniqueness children seek attention *because they need it.* Acknowledgment means that you communicate to a child in words the child can understand that you have heard or seen what he said or did *without judging or agreeing with what was said or done.* Children, especially low Uniqueness children, will persevere in misbehaving until they receive such acknowledgment. Giving it to them quickly can often reduce or stop inappropriate behavior. Low Uniqueness children tend to persist until they get attention, not stop what they're doing if they don't.

Level II—Acceptance

"I see that you have finished your picture and you feel good about it." Acceptance is a stronger method for affirming children. Acceptance acknowledges, then adds something more. In addition to hearing or seeing what the child has done, you communicate that you understand *why* it was done, still without judging or agreeing with what was said or done. Children

like to know that adults understand why they did something, even something negative or inappropriate.

An example of acceptance would be letting a child know that you understand that he got into a fight in order to stand up for a friend, even though fighting must not be sanctioned. You can let children know that their motives or intentions may have been good, even noble, but the behavior they used was not.

Acceptance is powerful because it affirms children's inner processes, their intentions and motives, even when you can't approve their behavior. Children's feelings are important to them, so affirming the intentions that arise from their feelings has a profound positive impact on them.

Level III—Agreement

"I see that you have finished your picture and that you feel good about it. I think it's a great picture, too." Only at this level is it necessary to let children know that you have made a positive judgment of their intentions and the way they carried them out. You have heard or seen what they did, have understood why, and now judge it to be a good product or action. Agreement is not praise, simply understood, because it simultaneously affirms both the internal process (the child's feelings, motives and intentions) and the external manifestation (what the child did to express the feelings).

Praise or a positive judgment of what the child has done is made of lesser stuff. The problem with praise is that it requires children to do something you can agree with, something that conforms to your values and standards. If the child produces little of such behavior, then you either can't give the child affirming messages, or you have to be insincere or praise something that's unimportant or irrelevant to the child's self-concept. At that point the low Uniqueness child senses your

insincerity, discounts your positive messages, and continues to seek negative attention through undesirable behavior.

Affirming children can be done despite dysfunctional behavior that results from their negative self-concepts. However, it's not quite as simple as "love the child but not the act." Communicating to children that you love them but not what they've done may affect their Sense of Connectiveness, especially if your communication is accompanied by nurturant behavior, such as touching, holding or smiling at them. But it doesn't raise their Sense of Uniqueness, which may be why such an approach has little effect on the worst behaved children, who often confuse condemnation of the act with rejection of themselves. This is especially true for low Uniqueness children.

In order to affirm children you don't necessarily have to accept or agree with them. Acknowledgment is simply a communication that you saw and heard what they did, and is sufficient in many instances to satisfy the low Uniqueness child's need to have his or her expression of a negative self-concept noticed. The better you know the children in your class, the more your capacity for acceptance grows, because you sense and understand the motives behind their behavior, even if the behavior itself is outrageous.

The affirming processes—acknowledgment, acceptance and agreement—are the key to raising children's Sense of Uniqueness. As this factor of self-esteem becomes stronger, children automatically become more able to express the finer and more functional aspects of their inner creative processes. In other words, affirming children's self-concept, even if that self-concept is negative, reduces their need to guard their inner Selves, and they become more inclined to express what they feel around those who seem to understand their feelings. Affirming children doesn't *make* them more creative; but it does allow their natural creativity to come forward. Many

teachers who begin to affirm children are often surprised by the creativity that emerges from those who were formerly seen as behavior problems.

The Role of Connectiveness, Power and Models

While the Sense of Uniqueness is the condition of self-esteem most associated with creative self-expression, the other conditions also make significant contributions. Children may restrict their creativity because they feel unsafe and disconnected from you or the other children (low Connectiveness), because they feel powerless or feel incapable of finding a way to express themselves (low Power), or because they are confused and vague about what they want to do (low Models). Let's look at some things you can do to raise these conditions of self-esteem in connection with children's creative self-expression:

You can create a safe environment for children. Children who feel cared for, connected to others, and satisfied in their need for affection and connection are more able to express their inner selves. You do this through raising the Sense of Connectiveness.

Enhancing children's Sense of Connectiveness can play a major role in encouraging creativity. As children develop their capacity for effective human relations, their ability to work with others is increased. As their Sense of Connectiveness grows, their capacity for empathy, sympathy and emotional understanding of others also grows. In a classroom in which self-expression is encouraged, the tolerance, patience and mutual support that emanates from a high Sense of Connectiveness is a real asset. Children learn to support each other rather than compete for limited resources and attention.

You can teach skills that allow children to find pathways to self-expression. Children can learn to paint, draw, speak, write and work within all the other forms that self-expression can take. They will learn to do these things with increasing competence as they find satisfaction in practicing them.

Acquiring and mastering new skills is one of the main ways children's Sense of Power is raised. And as this condition of self-esteem is strengthened, children's ability to express themselves grows and becomes more diversified. "Big" projects, ones that have size, substance and complexity, will tax children's existing skills and require them to learn new ones or refine ones they already have. Such projects have a profound effect on children's Sense of Power because, in the end, when they see the significant results of major effort, their feelings of competence and control are greatly enhanced.

You can organize your classroom so that children have access to many methods for self-expression. You can provide for this in the little day-to-day activities such as whether they can decorate their papers, or provide major art projects such as murals or constructions. The more methods of self-expression available to them, the more likely they will find one or more that is congruent with what they're trying to express, and the more their Sense of Power will be strengthened.

You can clarify the goals and purposes of classroom activities. This will build the Sense of Models. Children are expected to do things in school whether or not they understand the purpose of these tasks. Consequently, children often don't have a clue as to why they're doing something. As children come to understand the meaning of what they're doing—why it is important and where it fits into their lives—they use this

information to make sense of their world and learn new methods for achieving satisfaction in what they do.

When children see the relevance of what they're being asked to do, they feel a sense of order and purpose. This sense of order, the Sense of Models, aids them in learning in all areas and helps them find appropriate ways to express the Self in creative work.

The Interpersonal and Group Arena techniques detailed in Appendixes B and C offer many other ways to build each of the conditions of self-esteem. Creating a classroom environment in which all four conditions of self-esteem are nurtured and developed will enable all of the children in your classroom to find their own unique means of creative self-expression. As their self-esteem is enhanced in all its aspects, their capacity for creativity will manifest itself more and more frequently.

Chapter

5 Organizing the Classroom to Enhance Creativity

It would be somehow contrary to the nature of creativity if we were to provide a formula for developing it. At its root the notion of creativity supposes a playfield with an infinite variety of toys on it—the unique characteristics and expressions of each individual on that field.

The children in your classroom are different from those in every other. You, the teacher, are a unique person who will give a distinctive imprint to what goes on in your classroom. And the climate of your classroom is different from any other classroom in the school. The physical setting, the attitude of the administrator and other teachers toward you, and the special attributes of the grade and ages you teach make your classroom a special, unique place. There is no other like it on the face of the earth.

It is important that you believe this to be true. It's useful for the children in your class to believe that they are in a special place that offers them special opportunities. Feeling special, seeing the specialness in one's experience and being considered special by important others all contribute to the climate for creativity.

So much of educational thinking is directed toward finding methods, curricula and programs that can be applied across the board. Too often, who the teacher is and who is being taught are considered subordinate to or less important than the structure of the experiences and ideas to be taught. Enhancing creativity requires attention to the individual characteristics of the teacher and the students. At the root of creativity is the person, the single individual reaching inward to find his or her own uniqueness and express it to the world.

In this chapter we look at several special aspects of creativity that affect what you do in your classroom and how you do it. To create a climate for enhancing creativity, there are things to do and things to avoid doing. Since creative self-expression is the goal, it's important to think of barriers to it that will need to be removed, as well as activities that will promote it. You may already be doing many of the things described in this chapter. The suggestions are intended to give you a sense of what goes into a classroom dedicated to enhancing creativity so that you can develop your own distinctive methods for doing so.

The Modes of Creative Expression

There are a number of ways that people can express themselves creatively. In classrooms dedicated to encouraging creativity, these will be apparent and used extensively and variously.

The hands. The hands are one of the most important tools for expressing the Self creatively. They can draw, paint, write, sculpt, doodle, saw, hammer, poke, point, smooth, touch, hold, and gesture, among many other things. Children use their hands to learn about the world, manipulate it and control it. In classrooms where creativity is a deeply held value, there will be many things the hands can do.

The body. The body as a whole is an instrument for the expression of Self. This is true in the most fundamental way. Suppose that you see someone off in the distance, coming toward you. It's too far to see the face or clothes, but you can immediately tell it's one of your students because of the way he's moving and holding his body. No one else in the class walks and runs in just that way. The way our bodies move, responding to our inner urgings and the constraints of the environment, is as much a signature of who we are as anything else.

In addition to being an expression of who we are, bodies dance, run, jump, gesture, perform complex athletic feats, act out complex ideas and emotions, move heavy weights and handle the most delicate things. Dancing, acting, sports and many forms of work are arenas for the expression of Self in which nothing less than the whole body is required. In classrooms where creativity is a deeply held value, there will be many opportunities to use the body to creatively express the Self.

The mouth. The mouth is the most immediate and direct means for self-expression. It talks, sings, shouts, screams, cries, mumbles, hoots and howls; it is the main method for letting people know what we are feeling. And the mouth has corollary modes of expression, such as writing. The written word is a refinement in the use of language, but is fundamentally an alternative to the use of the mouth in communicating. We even use the term *voice* for the distinctive way of writing that is the signature of great writers.

The mouth in all its modes will be encouraged to express the Self of its owner in the creative classroom. "Mouthiness" will not be a pejorative term. There will be many ways for children to learn to use their mouths well and appropriately: discussion groups, public speaking, singing, recitations, readings, ques-

tions, writing in all its aspects, and simply opportunities to express personal needs, wishes, hopes and desires.

The creative classroom provides many opportunities for children to use their hands, bodies and mouths to express themselves. Variety is the key, since different children will respond to different means. Some will use their mouths more than their hands. Others will use their bodies more than either their hands or their mouths—in sports, for example.

The greater the number of means for self-expression in a classroom, the more creative self-expression will occur and the higher children's Sense of Uniqueness will be. More children will find a way to express themselves that works for them. In doing so their entire attitude about themselves and their role in school will be affected.

Fun and Humor

Fun and humor are teaching strategies. In deft hands they are powerful tools for making school a place where children like to be. Fun and humor are used throughout our society for teaching, convincing, selling, relating and soliciting people's attention. Stand-up comedians are the modern-day democratic versions of the court jesters who could influence policies by making the rulers laugh. You don't have to be a practicing comedian in order to be a good teacher, although many comedians have started out in the teaching profession.

Fun, laughter and good humor characterize classrooms where children are encouraged to express themselves in safety. People who can laugh are healthier than people who can't. Those who can laugh at themselves, their own foibles and illusions, are the healthiest of all. Children who go to school in such an atmosphere are likely to enjoy what they're doing.

Ask children to write or tell funny stories. Find out what they think is funny. Call children funny names, and make up names for common classroom objects, e.g., pencils can be called "writing sticks." Doing this creates a distinctive climate, more like fantasy play than hard work, yet doesn't mean you can't hold high academic standards. Puns give children practice in using language flexibly. Find humorous poems and stories so that the content of the work itself has humor attached.

Not everyone will think the same things are funny, but laughter itself is contagious. Its best attribute is that children feel safer when they're in a situation where laughter and goodwill are present. Bending reality in order to make a joke is very akin to the way an artist bends reality to make a painting more real at an emotional level. Whimsy and irony have always been associated with art and self-expression. Pay attention to things that children find funny and use them in your instructional tool kit. This will help to set a playful context where creativity can flourish.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness are often capable of creative humor, since they are flexible in the way they express themselves and seek to do it in novel and innovative ways. Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness can be helped to grow in this area when the classroom emphasizes humor and fun.

The Individual and the Group

Creativity is about the individual child's ability to express himself or herself. Classrooms are arranged so that much work is done in groups, and, more important, the ability of children to work in groups is a significant factor in their success in school. This places a premium on social skills and character-

istics; the loners, iconoclasts and atypical children are often viewed as problems.

This can cause stress for both teachers and children when creativity is an important value in the classroom. Highly social children may look to others as reference points for their own productivity. Teachers may be caught in the dilemma of having to choose between meeting the idiosyncratic needs of individual children and satisfying the needs of the group for cohesion and coherence. Highly individualistic children may resist the conforming behaviors that would make them functional group members. There is no simple solution to this problem. It is rooted in the nature of human beings and is a developmental challenge that all children face.

It's called "the self/other dilemma" in some quarters and can be summed up in the following question: When called upon to make choices about how to behave, does one listen to his or her own internal promptings and personal needs, or attend to the needs of others? When needs are more or less similar, satisfying oneself may also take care of others, and vice versa. But answering this question becomes a major problem when the needs of the Self and those of the others are widely divergent.

In self-esteem terms, children who have a high Sense of Connectiveness and a high Sense of Models are more likely to be considered successful in classrooms where group membership is a strongly held value. Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness, those who listen to the beat of a different drummer, will be considered problems, deviants or just plain weird! In such a setting, it's hard to promote creative self-expression as we've been defining it in this book.

Since neither absolute conformity to the group nor absolute individuality is a useful goal, it's clear that a balance between these two extremes must be struck. One of the most important factors affecting this balancing act is the personality and teach-

ing style of the teacher. A teacher with high Connectiveness is more likely to promote it in his or her class. A teacher with high Uniqueness is more likely to protect the needs of individuals. Neither teacher is wrong; neither method is wrong.

The needs of children are also a factor. In some classrooms there are many children who have a very weak Sense of Connectiveness. This may be the result of living in highly dysfunctional families where they have suffered abuse and deprivation. These children may need a climate in which the Sense of Connectiveness is promoted more than the Sense of Uniqueness.

Because of the number of children in most classrooms, the requirement for conforming to group norms and class rules is not likely to become a low priority. But in classrooms where enhancing creativity is a major goal, making space for individual needs becomes relatively more important.

Individual needs can be provided for in a number of practical ways:

- Make movable, cardboard study carrels that can be placed on a desk or table. Students who need to work in relative isolation can elect to use them.
- Have a part of the room where desks or tables are arranged for individual work; dedicate another part of the room to group work.
- Have a "time-out" desk where children can choose to sit, rather than having it be a punishment. Decorate it and call it the "Magical Centering Desk," or some other special label.
- Permit a low level of sociability all the time, e.g., children are allowed to carry on quiet conversations as long as they keep working and don't disturb others. This is a way to meet a broader range of social needs. When children's social needs are met they are more likely to

be able to work by themselves. More individualistic children can still work alone more often.

- Pay attention to the mix of group and individual activities that you use. Play with the balance and observe different results. For example, one week have children learn spelling words in small groups, the next have them study the words individually. Watch to see which children do better under which approach.
- Provide children with many choices in small things, such as the size and colors of paper for assignments, different-colored pencils, what stories they may read, where they can sit for different activities, whether to participate in an activity, so that individual tastes and styles can be expressed.
- Let children decorate papers and other assignments, even though it's not part of the activity. Make doodling and drawing regular options in the classroom.

Order and Disorder

Orderliness is highly valued in education. It often supersedes learning as a goal. This can be a significant barrier to establishing a creative classroom; creativity is often a messy business!

Visions of Van Goghian excess, profligate use of resources, dirty kindergarten paint smocks, and muddy clothes from water play often loom in teachers' imaginations when someone mentions creative expression. The thought of everyone running around "expressing themselves" in unique ways without regard to anyone else is enough to deter any teacher from offering creative opportunities. The excessive noise emanating from a joyful activity can spark the criticism of colleagues. The

very nature of the creative process seems to ensure its exclusion from schools dedicated to orderliness.

Even though such visions of creative chaos are an exaggeration, there are issues in this area that must be considered. Rational order and clear, predictable outcomes are not easily achieved through creative work, especially if the creative ones are small children. Joy, passion and unrestrained self-expression require physical as well as emotional latitude in order to occur. Creative expression through young mouths often becomes loud, boisterous, unbridled and insistent. Avid pursuit of an artistic Muse can make a mess on the floor!

Teachers who wish to create a climate for creativity in their classrooms simply cannot make orderliness their highest priority although it can remain an important one. We need to explore how an acceptable balance between order and disorder can be achieved. As with so many issues that surround creativity, the need of the individual for self-expression must be weighed against the need for group order. In the creative classroom the scales often tip in favor of the individual, although not always.

There are a variety of ways to bring order into the creative classroom without inhibiting the creative process for children:

Teach children that cleaning up is as much a part of the creative process as making a mess. Children must be partly responsible for maintaining physical order in their classrooms. Temporary disarray in the service of some creative pursuit must be followed by bringing the room back to a state of readiness for the next learning activity.

Keep cleanup in mind. If space permits, have a messy-work part of the classroom where small groups or individuals may freely work. Have lots of newspaper spread about to catch whatever messes may occur. Have rags and soap readily avail-

able. Keep smocks and aprons ready and insist that children wear them.

Make sure there are cleanup tools such as brooms, mops and dustpans in the classroom, and teach children how to use them. Many children who come from homes in which they are not consistently responsible for household chores will resist cleaning up after themselves; they need extra attention. Plan and allot time for cleanup as an essential part of any project or activity.

You can allow children more leeway in messy or disorderly activities when you are confident they will take responsibility for restoring order. Creativity is brought into disrepute when this duty is avoided or overlooked. Teachers cannot simply leave the messes for custodians to clean up. Freedom to express themselves avidly does not have to be restrained if children are also held accountable for taking care of the environment in which they create.

Think ahead and plan for noise and distraction. If you know that an activity is likely to create noise and distraction, check with colleagues in adjacent classrooms either to warn them or to solicit their input on when it's best to do it. This kind of collegial support is essential if a school is to be devoted to encouraging creativity. If space permits, take the class to areas where noise won't disturb others.

Recruit children to help restore furniture at the end of the day. Symmetry and linearity are less important to children than to custodial staff, who like rooms laid out for easy maintenance. Such rooms also satisfy adult needs for orderliness. But often children need to move desks and tables around to facilitate creative pursuits. Have a rotating "maintenance crew" of children who are responsible for restoring furniture to its rightful place at the end of the day, even if they must stay a little after school to do so. Children, especially younger ones, love to feel part of an adult activity.

Have adequate storage for classroom materials and projects. You can help maintain a climate of order by organizing materials and resources and storing them neatly. This sets an example for children, as well as offering an opportunity to stress the importance of neatness and order.

You may have to use your own creativity if your classroom lacks adequate storage for materials and projects. Hang works-in-progress from hooks in the ceiling, slightly out of children's reach, when shelf space is unavailable. Storage bins of every sort are one of the creative teacher's most important tools. Enlist the support of parents to help solve the storage problem by having a classroom workday devoted to building storage facilities for the classroom.

Provide an individual storage space for every child. An important aspect of the storage problem is providing individual storage space for every child. In the creative classroom, children simply have more "stuff" to keep and use. They need private spots in which to keep their work, tools and toys as well as the more conventional books and papers. Since privacy and individuality are so critical to the creative process, personal storage areas are very important, a sign to children that they and their creative work are being taken seriously. Ordinary school lockers only satisfy part of this need, since they are usually at some distance from where the children are doing their creative work.

As most parents find out, there is never enough space to contain the things children collect and keep, but every little bit helps. Personal space is a symbol of one's individuality as well as a functional necessity for creative work.

Developing a creative classroom requires you to pay careful attention to the need for orderliness without excessively restricting children's opportunities for creative expression. You are a facilitator for the natural process of creativity

in children; and one important role of the facilitator is to provide the means for self-expression and create the context in which creativity can be freed. This is an area requiring the highest creativity on your part.

The Classroom as Junkyard

The creative process might be viewed as a gigantic maw, swallowing everything in order to create something new. Children never feel they're wasting anything in their passion for expressing the Self; adults view the waste of costly resources with despair. The creative process is not easy on school or classroom budgets. This is why it's necessary to think about junk!

Creative people tend to collect things that can be used at some time in the future for a project—maybe! The collecting can go on and on, even when much of the stuff isn't used. Creativity and efficiency just don't seem to fit together very well. Children consume materials greedily, and they must have plenty of materials available to use. Teachers in creative classrooms need to become scavengers and enlist the help of others in the process. Here are some suggestions:

- Contact local businesses that may have disposable materials, e.g., surplus paper from printers, packing boxes from appliance stores, discarded clothing from thrift shops. Involve local businesses as partners in collecting.
- Make lists of materials that may be useful in creative projects and distribute the list to parents, who may have access to them through their jobs and contacts.
- Have storage facilities available, away from the school, where things you might use someday can be stored.
- Collect stuff that can be used for art projects, creative

play, plays, skits, crafts and building projects. Many things can be used over and over again for many years, while other things, such as art materials, will be disposed of quickly.

The creative process is a two-way street. Children seek materials to carry out the ideas they have; but they also use existing materials as a stimulus for new ideas. You won't need to order special supplies ahead of time. You can bring an armload of old stuff to the classroom and ask, "What do you think we can make out of this?" You'll likely be surprised and delighted with the answers you'll receive.

Informal Creative Opportunities

In the search for meaningful and measurable results from classroom curricular activities, we often lose sight of the fact that important things happen for children when we least expect it. Meaningful learning is always a result of a relationship between a child's internal state of readiness and the external stimulus or opportunity. Much of learning can't be easily programmed, but it can be allowed to happen.

This has ramifications for encouraging creativity in schools. Many educators feel that unless meaningful, coherent curricula in potentially creative areas such as art, writing and drama are developed, creative work is precluded. This is not true. Opportunities for creative self-expression are always available. We must pay attention to the informal opportunities as well as the formal ones.

Often there are occasions within a formal learning activity that permit creative self-expression, even though such expression is not central to the activity itself. Here are some examples:

- Allow a few minutes at the end of a workbook assign-

ment for children to use colored pencils or crayons to embellish and decorate the worksheet before handing it in. Then each child's sheet will be unique and different, not simply the same page from the same workbook.

- Have different colors and sizes of papers available for assignments so that children can do the work on a piece of paper that pleases them. This adds a personal note to a task that might otherwise be impersonal.
- Provide each child with a simple clipboard made from heavy cardboard and a large paper clip. (These could be made as a class project.) Allow children to sit wherever they wish to do an assignment. Some might even sit outside the classroom door. The freedom to do assigned work in one's own fashion can change a rote task into a personal expression.
- Give children several problems in arithmetic on a worksheet, with space for them to create and solve several more of a similar sort on their own. This allows children to become active participants in developing their own learning activities, adding or reducing challenge as their self-esteem determines.
- Provide every child with a personal sketchbook made from paper scavenged from a local print shop. Allow children to sketch if they finish an assignment early. Children can also be exempted from an assignment they've already mastered if they want to work in their sketchbooks. These books are not collected or graded unless children wish you to see them. They must remain in the classroom all the time (in the children's personal storage spaces) so they're not lost, stolen or used to embarrass the children.
- Give children imaginative options for assignments. For

example, an assignment to write a story about Halloween might include the option to write a story about Halloween on Jupiter, particularly if children had recently studied the solar system. (Making this an option rather than the assignment itself allows children with a lower Sense of Uniqueness to still write a story about their favorite Halloween costume if they wish.) Or how about a story about Halloween in a land in which the number 6 was not known. I have no idea how such a story might come out, but am quite sure someone in your class does!

- Allow time at the end of any assignment for children to turn the paper over and draw a picture, with ordinary pencils, that symbolizes how they feel about the task they've just completed. In addition to being another vehicle for creativity, this shows children that it's OK for them to have different feelings about a common task. Do this unannounced from time to time so children can't anticipate when they'll have the opportunity.

Opportunities to add a small occasion for creative self-expression abound in everything you do. Such opportunities do not detract from the learning activity, nor do they require the activity to be "creative" in itself. It's often hard to think of a creative way to drill students in a conventional skill area, and it's not necessary to as long as you provide informal opportunities for children to add something of themselves to an otherwise impersonal task.

Giving children informal creative opportunities within formal learning activities makes creative self-expression part of the learning process itself, not a separate task to be "done" in art class. It doesn't require significant outlay of time or resources, nor does it cut into the time required to complete an already crowded curriculum. But it does make children feel as

if school is a place where play and work are often indistinguishable and where they are valued for who they are.

There isn't any set way to have a creative classroom. No limited group of activities based on creative principles will do the trick, and the arts aren't the only arena in which creativity is expressed. The classroom climate is a key to encouraging children to be their own creative selves. That climate is built out of the teacher's constant attention to creative opportunities. These opportunities are always available. Seeing them is a matter of perspective.

Art projects, play productions, significant writing assignments and other creative outlets are important parts of children's experience. It would be nice if schools had the time and resources to do them well. It would be nice if all teachers had the skills and inclination to offer significant artistic experiences for children.

The fact that we don't have resources enough and that many teachers don't view their essential role as stimulating children's creativity needn't stop educators from moving in that direction. Enhancing children's creativity is something that fits easily into readin', 'ritin' and 'rithmetic, when teachers create appropriate classroom climates and activities and capitalize on informal opportunities for creative self-expression.

Chapter

6 The Teacher's Role in a Creative Classroom

We often speak of the role of the teacher as a critical element in learning. We expect a teacher to use his or her pedagogical and social skills to help children learn and to provide an organized environment in which they can do so. However, the role of the teacher in a classroom devoted to promoting creativity may be somewhat different from the usual expectations. In the creative classroom, the teacher's influence is determined by more than the skills that he or she possesses. Creative influence is largely a function of nature and character, things less subject to training and practice.

How teachers handle the barriers to creative self-expression set up by the structure and processes of schooling is a very personal matter, as well as a potential source of stress and anxiety. Teachers are suspect when they emphasize children's creative individuality, provide many opportunities for creative self-expression, and reduce controls to promote spontaneity and playfulness. Teachers who attempt play with the gift of the gods—creativity—are likely to be struck by lightning. It's a dangerous business!

This is not to warn you off doing the things proposed in this book, but rather to make you aware of and help you identify the obstacles you may have to face in order to promote real creative self-expression in your "ordinary" classroom in the "ordinary" school where you teach. Because if you really work in ways that promote creativity and enhance children's Sense of Uniqueness, you will be doing something extra-ordinary. You will stand out from the crowd. That's why it's useful to have a network of teachers, ideally an entire school staff, dedicated to uncovering the creative potential of the students. Mutual support for doing the extraordinary establishes a climate in which people can grow and change.

Here are some useful attributes for teachers to have if they wish to promote creative self-expression in their students in a significant way:

- They like what they're doing and have fun doing it.
- They enjoy children immensely and never feel so alive as when they're with a group of kids who are learning.
- They are individualists who enjoy being a little different from the crowd and have a history of being that way.
- They enjoy and find avenues for self-expression in their own lives, through formal artistic practices or perhaps just by having a "style" that is flamboyant or unusual.
- They laugh a lot—at themselves as well as the world around them.
- They pay more attention, in general, to what children are feeling than to what children are doing. They're more concerned when children feel bad than when children "fail."
- They love the give and take of interaction with children and aren't overwhelmed when lots of things are going on

simultaneously in their classrooms. They enjoy chaos—just a little!

- They tolerate unusual characteristics or behavior in children and in their own friends because they find it interesting.
- They may have a personal form of self-expression, such as art, writing or dance, or they may simply do "ordinary" things in unusual and creative ways.
- They value personal experience a bit more than abstract knowledge. They like to experience something for themselves rather than learn about it in theory. They tend to believe that practical experience is more useful than intellectual expertise.

The above list details some of the attributes that teachers who promote a high level of creativity in the classroom seem to have. But whether or not such a teacher fits this profile, he or she is very likely to be a strong individual, someone who respects himself or herself and seeks respect from others. In a word, teachers who promote the Sense of Uniqueness in children are likely to have a high Sense of Uniqueness themselves.

Being Yourself in Your Classroom

Children respond to genuineness in their teachers. Children can sense genuineness in a teacher, usually because it manifests itself in confident action. It's hard to fake this quality, as most of us know from our earliest days in the classroom, before we began to trust ourselves as teachers. We hoped and prayed that the children would think we knew what we were doing, when we didn't know ourselves. It seldom worked.

Being yourself in your classroom is important because it allows children to feel safe with you. They sense who you are,

know that you're likely to act consistently, and can thus predict how their behavior and performance will affect you and be regarded by you. Being genuine will go a long way toward creating a safe classroom climate, irrespective of the teaching practices you use.

Being yourself doesn't mean you can't exhibit variability in your behavior. Playacting, drama and humor are all expressions of one's Self. The most genuine teachers are often putting on great performances, but those performances, e.g., acting as if children's lack of response to something you've said is a dastardly crime, are an expression of the real, playful Self. Children sense very quickly if a performance is a comfortable, natural expression of your Self or just a technique you're adopting.

Another advantage of being yourself in your classroom is the framework this provides for your instructional practices. You will tend to do the things that feel right to you, and will therefore act and teach with a high level of spontaneity. You will feel free to try new things out of curiosity and interest. You will also be very influenced by children's needs.

Being yourself means that you aren't reluctant to do things to please yourself. These will range from making a spontaneous change in your schedule—"I don't feel like having reading groups today; how would you like me to read you a story instead?"—to decorating or redecorating your classroom, changing the colors you use and the personal items that you bring to class for your own enjoyment.

A creative language teacher impressed one of my classes with furious outbursts of profanity in unusual languages when someone did things not to his taste. Of course no one really knew whether it was profanity or not, or even whether it was a real foreign language. He'd say, "That was Arabic," to a class that had no idea whether it was or not. His outbursts were always followed by his laughter and ours. He'd make his point,

grab our attention, and often renew the class's energy to pursue the studies. He was weird; but I was impressed by the lessons he taught.

Being yourself sounds simple. But it may not be easy in a school that has narrow norms for teacher behavior. There is always pressure, even in the best schools, for teachers to act according to the norms of their colleagues. Being yourself may at times bring you into conflict with those collegial norms and place you in opposition to things the majority of your colleagues believe. At such times, having the courage of your convictions must be part of being yourself.

The Need for Courage in Creativity

Creativity, the act of expressing the Self in satisfying ways through some medium, requires a lot of courage. Exposing the Self to potential criticism, judgment or shame is not easy to do.

Children learn courage by being around courageous people; they learn to do the right thing despite their fears. A teacher doesn't need to perform foolhardy acts of public bravery in order to qualify as a model of courage for students. But he or she does need to practice a "let's try this and see what happens" kind of day-to-day courage. Courageous teachers act as models for children by showing that you can try things that don't work, and that these small failures can give you the drive to do better rather than being reasons to give up.

To demonstrate this form of courage, teachers need to be more than cheerleaders for children. They need to try things that involve significant risk, including allowing children to find new and satisfying ways to express themselves that may distinguish the class from others in the school. The children will know when they are on the edge of something unusual; they compare themselves to others all the time.

Trusting children to monitor their own behavior in small work groups is an act of courage, especially when you're just beginning to teach them how. They are very likely to fail, with ensuing rancor and disorganization. Giving an individual child the opportunity to work on something that requires him or her to be exempted from the regular work of the class can produce negative reactions from other students, parents or the administration. But what if you know the child needs this opportunity? Acting with conviction takes courage.

Having children work on a long, hard project, like painting a very big mural for a whole wall in your room (on roll paper, of course) takes courage. What if they can't complete the project for any number of reasons? Will the size of the undertaking be too much for them? Are there children with sufficient skills and a sense of responsibility to carry the project through? Such undertakings, especially when you haven't tried them before, test your persistence and courage. But if the children believe that you believe they can do it, their performance is greatly influenced by that belief.

Even after the planning is done and a project is clearly in mind, the resources available, and the educational merits clear, it still takes courage to begin. There aren't more examples of the extraordinary work of which children are capable because too many teachers don't have the courage to undertake such efforts.

In a classroom and school devoted to enhancing children's creativity, the courage of the teachers and administrators will be a key element. There are ways to buttress courage. Collegial support within a teaching staff is the best way. Teachers supporting each other to try new things is often the main avenue to change. Sharing the risk is another way to put it. Administrators need to have courage to support teachers who act courageously. (The next chapter will talk more about this.)

You can plan a project ahead of time in order to ensure that

you will be able to carry it through. You can test your ideas on colleagues in order to see whether you've thought it through sufficiently. You can prepare the children for a large project by teaching them skills that will help them achieve success, e.g., having them do preliminary drawings for the big mural. You can warn your administrator about what you intend to do and solicit his or her support. Having courage does not require you to take greater risks than necessary. Foresight is also a virtue.

In the end, the way to measure the type of courage we're discussing is to measure the size of the gap between what makes you comfortable and what will make you feel highly satisfied that you've done something special. You are the only one who can identify how much courage it will take to leap across that gap.

Teaching with Dramatic Intent

I've always been impressed with the teaching skill of stand-up comedians. Standing in front of a hostile audience with nothing but your body, voice and ideas to convince and persuade is more like teaching then anything else I can think of. Successful stand-up comics teach an audience very quickly when to laugh and what to laugh at.

Teachers who wish to encourage creativity in their classrooms make their teaching something of a creative performance, not to entertain the children, but to instruct in a climate of goodwill, fun and safety. Sometimes you just have to pull for a laugh in order to get their attention.

Depending on your background and interests, you may have an inclination to drama and similar activities for children. If so, you probably are fully aware of what I've been saying. Teaching with dramatic intent may come naturally to you. But

the many who have been taught that teaching is serious business will need to study the application of dramatic techniques to teaching.

In the creatively oriented classroom, instruction has a different goal than in a more conventional classroom. That goal is to direct children inward and allow them to explore their own motives and purposes to help them uncover the feelings that will result in creative self-expression. You want to teach in such a way as to send children a strong message that it's OK to be themselves and to express the Self in their work. Humor, drama and even stand-up "schtick" become instruments for producing the climate in which this can occur.

The following suggestions can help you develop your own personal style for using drama in your classroom:

- Have yourself observed, even videotaped if possible, in order to evaluate how you present yourself to the children. Do you vary your presentation? Do you use your voice for effect? How do your hands support the messages you're trying to send? Does your expression change with what you're saying? Does your body convey energy and enthusiasm? Do you use a variety of verbal techniques to get a point across, e.g., puns, metaphors, allusions, examples, similes?
- Select something from a repertoire of actions that you normally don't use and plan to consciously use it during the day. If you don't use your hands when talking, try to. If you normally stand up when talking to the class, sit from time to time. Move around the room when talking if you usually stand in one place. Keep in mind that changing the way you make presentations may feel awkward at first.
- Observe or have a colleague observe your experiments to determine whether different children respond differ-

ently to different techniques. Notice how particular children respond.

- Alter the "set" from time to time. Move your desk to different parts of the room. Change the decorations frequently. Bring new objects to class without comment and take note of which children respond to new things. Change the orientation of the desks without changing the seating arrangements and see what effect it has on children's behavior.

These suggestions are not made frivolously. Change is the key. Creative expression depends on change, because as feelings change in response to changes in the environment, the need to express these shifting feelings grows. The climate of change that results from changes the teacher makes in presentation style and the physical environment stimulates children's emotional growth.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness notice changes in the environment quickly because they have a strong interest in novelty and innovation. They like it when things are different because the changes prompt them to respond in new and different ways. Children with a low Sense of Uniqueness need the environment to change in order to awaken their curiosity and willingness to deal flexibly with new circumstances.

Great teachers use a wide variety of teaching techniques and approaches. They are characteristically flexible and innovative in meeting children's needs and challenges. Such teachers stimulate their students' creative juices and thus enable them to move to higher levels of productivity. These qualities are what make an ordinary teacher into a master of the trade. Thinking about how to introduce variation and interest in the way you teach is the first step in promoting a richer environment that will foster the creative potential of your students.

Using Ambiguity to Motivate Children

Tolerance for ambiguity is an important characteristic to have if you want to enable children to cope with the ambiguities of creative work. Tolerance for ambiguity is central to the creative process in children and adults. The results of creative endeavor are often uncertain; and in the creative process one often operates on the cutting edge of one's knowledge or experience. As a teacher, you need tolerance for ambiguity in a very great measure because of the large number of children you come in contact with.

In education we often presume that children are like each other. We seek commonalities that will permit us to develop standard curricula and standard instructional methods that will apply to large groups of children. Presuming that children have characteristics in common allows us to avoid dealing with the differences and ambiguities that actually exist.

We understand much about the source of individuality in children, from the effect of genetic predispositions to the fact that no two individuals ever have precisely the same experience. When we presume common characteristics we're able to make predictions about what most children will do under given conditions. When we focus on individual variations, however, it's hard to tell how a child will respond to a given stimulus. The creative process is so linked to individuality that one can never predict how a particular child will react to an activity or express his or her Self.

When children are given the opportunity for self-expression in the interests of enhancing their creativity, almost anything can happen. Nothing may happen. Something of significance may happen. Things can get out of control. Usually they don't. It's hard to predict. We will see the results in the product produced or in the actions the child takes, but we will never

know for sure what the inner dynamic was that prompted the action or product.

Promoting creativity demands teachers who are able to handle ambiguity and the mysteries of creativity with confidence and patience. Trying to fit children's creative efforts into categories in order to understand what they're doing does a disservice to their creative process.

Anxiety results from excessive ambiguity. When the level of ambiguity exceeds one's level of comfort or tolerance, one of two reactions occurs: Either people try to control the source of the ambiguity, or the variations that produce the ambiguity are denied or overlooked. In the case of creativity, this means teachers either try to control the child or the child's performance or choose to disregard the unique and idiosyncratic elements in a child's production and focus on the things the performance has in common with others'.

All of this leads to the inevitable judgments that children experience daily in schools. Measuring children and their work against a norm or standard, or against other children's performance (the normal distribution curve), is the inevitable result of educators not being able to handle the ambiguities of children's actual behavior. We fit children into molds or categories rather than accepting the amazing variations among them, because variation is hard to control.

How can you as a teacher increase your tolerance for ambiguity? One's ambiguity threshold seems to be such an intrinsic, immutable part of one's personality. But the organization of the classroom and how you go about doing things can influence how you feel about ambiguity, and how you feel will influence your behavior and your response to it.

Let's use judgment as an example. Suppose you have an activity, academic or otherwise, in which no grades are given and no criticism of children's performance is made. Children will want to know how well they've done, and you will want

to be able to correct their errors. But judgment would be the inevitable result of fulfilling these desires.

In situations where you don't grade or correct work, you must do *something* with it! Perhaps you can turn the assessment back to the children: "How well do you think you've done?" "Can you figure out a way to correct your own paper?" "Can the three of you, working together, figure out for yourselves how well you've done?" Keeping a certain ambiguity alive tends to motivate children to fill in the spaces, so to speak. Their inclination to know how well they've done doesn't need to be denied, but your inclination to judge can be restrained.

Play with creating little ambiguities throughout the day: "I don't know what you should do now. What do you think?" A teacher's urge to control and guide children's behavior is, in part, a response to ambiguity. If you're not telling them what to do, what will they do? The answer is *something!* And what they will choose to fill those ambiguous spaces is material that arises from their inner dispositions. In fact, the choices children must make to resolve ambiguities that you create as a teacher are a variation of the creative process and give them another means for exercising self-expression.

Suppose an art teacher gives students a blank sheet of paper and a large box of crayons, all colors and sizes. The activity is clear—draw something—but within that boundary, ambiguity is very high. There is nothing on the paper, and anything is possible. This type of situation makes the children with very low self-esteem anxious. "What do you think I should draw?" is a question that some children in the class will automatically and consistently ask. But most will accept the level of ambiguity presented and resolve it somehow, with the first crayon they select from the box. The result can be a piece of work that both satisfies and represents something about the child.

Metaphorically speaking, you have blank sheets of paper

and large boxes of crayons in every area of your curriculum! You can reduce the amount of control and the number of directions you give; you can solicit children's opinions and choices; and you can leave room for work that won't be judged or graded. In these ways you will use ambiguity to motivate, elicit responsibility and give children ownership of their learning process.

But should you do this all the time and in every instance? No, because that might make the situation overly ambiguous for too many of the children in your classroom. Some might handle it well, but many do not have enough experience in filling the ambiguous moments of life with their own choices and expressions of Self. Tolerance for ambiguity may need to be developed slowly.

Having children learn to handle ambiguity is crucial in preparing them for life, as well as for the increasingly complex features of schooling they will face as they get older. But in order to increase children's tolerance for ambiguity, you the teacher have to be able to handle it well. You will inspire your students by your confidence in your own ability and your belief in their ability to deal effectively with ambiguity.

Raising Your Own Sense of Uniqueness

To raise the Sense of Uniqueness in children, it's helpful if you have a good Sense of Uniqueness yourself. You can raise your own sense of Uniqueness by maximizing the opportunities for creative self-expression in your own life and work. There are some simple and direct ways to do this, even if you tend to be cautious or conservative in nature. You don't have to be highly flamboyant or artistic in order to have good self-esteem and enhance self-esteem in your students. Here are some ideas:

- Keep a journal. This simple activity is a way that many

people express themselves in safety and security. It's also good activity to teach children. Expressing yourself honestly and directly to yourself can help you deal with many issues in your life; and if you're reluctant to share what you write with others, you don't have to. Sometimes teachers can get together in journal-sharing networks or writing groups.

- Have objects that are personally meaningful for you in your room. Pictures of your family and friends, souvenirs from special trips you've made, artwork that you love and other personal items make the classroom yours in a real and emotional way. Share stories about the objects with your students.
- Participate with the children in some of the assignments you give them. When they are doing artwork, allow yourself to work along with them. Keep paper and crayons on your desk and share your efforts with them. When children are writing stories, take some time to write one of your own.
- Consciously do things in your classroom that are unusual or different. Use a temple gong to solicit attention. Play music softly in the background. Hang colored streamers from the ceiling, and change the colors from time to time. A novel and innovative environment sparks children's creativity and motivation and they, in turn, spark yours. The enthusiasm and energy you put into such projects is returned to you through that of the children.
- Identify your own special qualities. What makes you different and unique? What are the things you like about yourself? The best way to grow is to maximize the expression of your best points, not try to change your worst ones. Most people don't clearly identify their best quali-

ties, although they easily come up with a list of their worst ones! Focus on your strong points; it's worth the effort.

- Have an activity in which you ask children to identify their best qualities, the things they really like about themselves. Children with low Uniqueness will have trouble with this, but don't allow them to avoid the task. Help them overcome their reluctance to think well of themselves. (You will have to learn to do this for yourself first!)
- Consciously pick a behavior to change. Wear an outrageous pair of socks with a dressy, refined outfit. Put the socks on when you get to your classroom if you want to avoid colleagues' stares in the hall. Take them off before you leave if you're fashion conscious. But make a big joke of it with your students, and encourage them to wear something a bit odd to school or just in your classroom. This is not a structured dress-up-day activity, but just a way to allow children to say, "Here I am, look at me!"

The fun and humor that arise from the teacher doing something odd makes a classroom a safe and comforting place to be. So what if your students think you're a little weird! It makes you slightly unpredictable and requires them to pay slightly more attention to you. That's not a bad instructional technique.

Honoring the Self

There are many children with a low Sense of Uniqueness in our schools. Their prospects in life are limited by their inability to respect themselves and give full expression to their intelligence and imagination. Teachers who respect themselves and

their own creativity are best equipped to help children release the Selves that may have been trapped inside by deprivation, criticism and abuse.

Teachers who want to enhance the creativity of their students need to use their own unique qualities to do so. The qualities that make you an individual need to become manifest in your classroom. Children need models of loving adults who are comfortable in being themselves and who allow children to be themselves.

But true self-esteem enhancement is not just a matter of allowing children to be themselves. It also requires honoring the Self that children express when they engage in creative work—the Self that peeks through the window of the house in the picture drawn with colored pencils; the Self that emanates from the entire body of a child fully engaged in a dance; the Self that proclaims itself through a unique and wondrous choice of words to describe a sunset in a story. Children's Selves need to be honored by recognition and support, and there must be few limitations placed in that support. Only then will children feel free to express their essential Selves in the myriad of exciting and creative ways of which they are all capable.

Chapter

7 To the Administrator: Promoting Creativity in Your School

The nature of administration and supervision is to employ rational and logical methods for solving problems and moving an organization toward its goals and objectives. In doing these things you exercise control to keep things on course, you seek efficiency in everything you do from saving money to managing bus schedules, and you reduce ambiguity in every area you can so that rules, policies, procedures and standards are honored.

Control, efficiency and *reducing ambiguity* are not terms we associate with creativity. In addition, your district office colleagues expect you to be a team player, implement district policies, control expenditures, keep the teachers and staff happy, and be a strong leader in your school. Teachers expect you to be on *their* team, design policies that fit the needs of the school, spend freely for things they need, respect their professional objectives, and pursue their goals. There is a lot of potential conflict built into that mix of demands.

Like many teachers, your interest in creativity may be limited by your view of yourself as a creative or noncreative person. If

you have creative interests or avocations, you may wish to see these incorporated into your school's program. If you're like many educators, you don't see yourself as an actively creative person, except in a narrow pedagogical sense. But this does not preclude your lending active support and advocacy for expanding opportunities for creative self-expression in your school.

You have a special role in this regard. In the first chapter, we looked at a number of the tensions and issues in schools that make active pursuit of creativity in learning difficult. Your role as the school's administrator places you right in the middle of most of those conflicts. Depending on how you view your role and your relationship to teachers and children, you will lean to one side or the other in each of the polarities reviewed in that chapter. The balance you strike will be a function of your personal beliefs and personality as much as a result of carefully considered educational theories.

While there are many things you can do to promote creativity in your school, the most far-reaching effects will spring from the way you support the individuality and innovative ideas of the teachers. They are on the frontline with students. They are the ones who can take advantage of the many opportunities for self-expression afforded in the day-to-day programs. How you communicate your support for innovation, experimentation, individuality and divergent educational practices will let your school community know where you stand on the issue of creativity.

In this chapter we will explore the various aspects of the administrator's role in a school that's devoted to promoting creative self-expression in its students. Those aspects will be largely associated with how you enhance the Sense of Uniqueness in teachers and instill respect for individuality as a value in your school. (Appendix C lists specific methods for doing this.)

Even though individual teachers in your school may ea-

gerly embrace the idea of creativity and employ unusual and innovative methods for developing it in children, the school as a whole will move more slowly in that direction. Teachers vary in their interest and comfort in this area. You may not have control over who has been assigned to your school or who could be transferred to another in the district. Your district may have a commitment to a basic education program that makes interest in the area of creativity a lower priority. Educational ideas and philosophies may not be oriented in favor of creative self-expression for children.

But you may be able to do more to encourage a climate favorable to creative development than it may seem, since the first and most crucial step is to support teachers in their individual efforts. There are stresses associated with doing this, but they're manageable—and the benefits are worth it.

Support Teachers Who Encourage Creativity

In most schools there are at least one or two teachers who seem to be at the leading edge in encouraging children to express themselves creatively. Depending on the norms and values of the school, they are either nurtured or criticized by their less adventurous colleagues. In most instances they present at least a few problems for the administrator since they seem to be requesting special resources, opportunities and privileges for themselves and the children they teach.

Such teachers are often in your office or at your door, excited about an idea they have for a field trip, a special project or a new material they heard about in a workshop they recently attended. They are often charming, bubbling with enthusiasm for their ideas, and they try to elicit your support for the grand adventure they'd like to undertake. Part of you is delighted by their avid interest in their students; the administrator in you is

often challenged to deny their request or put it on the pile with all the other, more conventional ones you already have.

In your wish to be fair to other staff members and to honor your obligations to the budget, you may not find it easy to deal with teachers who are like this. How can you support someone who requires a disproportionate amount of school resources? How can you justify bending or breaking school policies or precedents in order to support one teacher's new ideas? Furthermore, how is it possible for you to consider having more teachers like this on your staff?

Many administrators approach this dilemma with a "hold the line" attitude, setting limits, counseling such teachers to be reasonable in their demands, and sometimes taking an adversarial attitude toward them, especially if they're considered somewhat out of step by the rest of the staff. In truth, some of their ideas will be only marginally justifiable. But they are trying to break new ground. They wish to try things they haven't tried before. Thus, they may not have tight and convincing rationales for their ideas, and they may wish to do something that has some risk of failing.

Rather than merely setting bureaucratic hurdles for them to overcome (the standard administrative response to marginal ideas)—"Write up a project proposal on form XG-325 and I'll take it down to the next administrative council meeting, a week from next Tuesday. But I can't promise they'll approve it"—you can find ways to uphold administrative standards while supporting such teachers in their search for new educational experiences for their students. But you can do this only if you establish a climate and a context for dealing with such matters rather than dealing with each case as a unique problem. Here are some ideas for building such a context:

Engage teachers in sharing administrative decisions. This can be done through a rotating administrator's council that meets regularly with you to review important decisions

and provide advice. Create a staff committee structure that allows teachers with different interests to meet in topically oriented groups with you (e.g., committees dealing with budget, curriculum, text selection, subject areas, long-term planning and other areas relevant to your school). When teachers have a stake in the significant decisions that affect the school and their classrooms, they are more likely to approach resource management with a responsible attitude.

Encourage support systems and collegial networking. You can help create a collegial atmosphere by promoting the following ideas:

- Regular grade level meetings
- Topical support groups (e.g., using children's literature in the reading program)
- Reading roundtables that meet to discuss current books on education
- Interclass visits so that teachers can observe each other in action
- Child study groups that encourage discussion of children who are presenting challenges
- Resource development activities in which groups of teachers create teaching materials that can be used in several classes
- New idea sharing during regular staff meetings. Rotate this activity but make it a regular part of the staff meeting. Then teachers can ask for ideas and help with what they're doing, and more experienced teachers can help those who are trying new ideas for the first time.

Bring new and innovative ideas to the attention of your staff. Create a circulation system for journal articles, magazines, and other materials that contain ideas individual teachers might use.

Help teachers think about alternatives. If a field trip cannot be taken because the budget for field trips has been expended, is there a way to bring the trip to the classroom? When materials can't be purchased, is it possible to borrow them from another school? When a proposed activity is likely to produce disruption, is there a different way to accomplish the same objective? When teachers feel your essential support of what they are doing, they are more likely to accept your judgment about constraints and limitations.

In the same vein, give teachers information about budgets and other administrative constraints in a context of seeking alternatives. It's easy to blame such constraints for stopping good things from happening. It's a creative exercise to use such constraints as the basis for imaginative problem solving about how to overcome them.

Support teachers who are trying new ideas in their classrooms. Check with them to see how things are going. Ask them to report to you after they've tried something. Encourage them to share their experiences in staff meetings. Everyone feels supported when you acknowledge the risky or challenging things teachers are doing.

Promote Respect for Individuality

Administrators seem naturally inclined to create management systems that require conformity to rules, policies, procedures and precedents. Promoting respect for individuality requires a different approach. As an administrator you have a powerful influence on school climate when you do things that aren't ordinary and usual elements of your role. Here are some examples:

Respond personally to exemplary work. Have teachers pass on exemplary pieces of work that children have done,

and respond with specific notes to those children. When less successful students have done something well enough to receive the principal's private recognition, it sends a powerful message about the importance of the individual in your school. A private note in response to a good piece of work shows that the individual is being respected, not employed as a device for motivating others. This is especially important among older students and among those who have a poor self-concept or low Sense of Uniqueness.

Offer special attention to children who need it. Along with teachers, identify children in the school who would benefit from special attention. Seek these children out, say hello and check in with them about how they're doing. Encourage other staff members to take special note of such children.

In one school, a very unsuccessful and socially isolated child was selected by the staff for special treatment. During the course of a week, each staff member, including support staff, made sure to greet this child by name at least once. Most staff also said something more to him, often commenting about the weather or the nice shirt he was wearing. Gradually the child's startled looks at this abundance of attention changed to smiling greetings. By the end of the week the child's entire demeanor had changed, including his posture. Other children, noticing that teachers thought this child was important, started treating him differently, and his classroom teacher noticed increased attention and persistence in his work.

The effort by the entire staff changed this child's self-concept and provided the environmental conditions that supported a new one. The effect lasted far beyond the time the staff took for the project.

Introduce the concept of student rights. Initiate a long-range project to review, with staff, the school's discipline procedures to ensure that student rights are supported along with student responsibilities. Discuss what *student rights* means

in your school with the staff. Over time, you might engage students in these discussions, but only after the staff has had an opportunity to clarify, overall, what their position toward student rights is.

Visit classrooms frequently. Be sure teachers understand that this is not for purposes of evaluation but to ensure continuing contact with students who need special attention. Have teachers identify such children to you beforehand, and greet them briefly. These children are likely to have low Connectiveness or low Uniqueness, and even a brief recognition from the principal will be something special.

Encourage writing in all its forms. This is the single most important curricular vehicle for creative self-expression. Fortunately, it is also a critical skill for success in most of the things children are likely to do later in life. Encourage writing forms that are unusual in most schools, such as journals, novels, poetry and nongraded writing assignments. Support individual teachers and the school as a whole in producing collections of children's writing. Have a school literary magazine that includes staff writing along with children's.

Meet with teachers one-to-one on a regular basis. Identify their special resource needs and the things they are doing that are innovative or at least stretch their skills. Offer concrete support to teachers by working with them to identify resources you can access for their special projects. In your meetings with them, encourage individual teachers to try out new ideas and to bring their own special skills, talents and interests into the classroom. By encouraging and supporting teachers' individuality, you automatically create a climate in which they are more likely to pay attention to children's individual needs.

Develop an Experimental Attitude

Developing and supporting an experimental attitude in your school does not require you to secure a major research grant! Nor does having such an attitude require you to disregard district policies or alienate yourself from your administrative colleagues. You can foster experimentation in many ways:

Encourage and support new ideas. Develop multiple ways for new ideas to circulate among the staff. New ideas are the lifeblood of research and experimentation, because one never knows when a new idea may apply to something being done in the school. Here are some suggestions:

- Have staff members volunteer to review each issue of different educational journals, one journal per teacher. Have time in each staff meeting for reports from each researcher about articles that might be of interest to other teachers in the school. Have them prepare copies of interesting articles for circulation. Have a periodical collection at the school if one isn't available at a district resource center.
- Have periodic brainstorming sessions with all or with small groups of the staff. Have teachers share interesting ideas they've come across since the last meeting. Ask teachers to check with colleagues in other schools to find out what special projects other schools or teachers may be doing.
- Invite other administrators in your district to visit your school, meet with your staff and share ideas about what teachers are doing in their schools. This promotes a broader arena for collegiality in the district or local area.
- Identify local, regional and national data centers, especially those that can be accessed through computers. When you know a teacher is developing a new idea,

help him or her access information through these centers.

It's important to recognize an important principle when encouraging people to review and use new ideas: An idea needs to help a teacher solve a current problem in order to be a good one. Cosmic truths are likely to be far less useful than practical suggestions from someone who has tried the idea before. This is why the best ideas often come from one's colleagues rather than from the latest research journals. A good climate for new ideas is one where teachers talk to each other a lot.

Move quickly from an idea to action. Too much time taken in justifying, forming and analyzing ideas can be the deathknell of an experimental attitude. Quickly moving from ideas to action may involve a lot of trial and error. Some of the ideas will fail or not produce the desired results. A willingness to try something that may not work is part and parcel of experimentation. It also makes teachers feel safer when implementing new ideas.

Promote collegial interaction. A high level of collegial interaction, promoted in every way, is most likely to help sift and sort ideas so that good ones float to the surface for trial. This is especially the case when the collegial climate is supportive rather than critical of new ideas.

Not everyone has to have the same enthusiasm for implementing new ideas for an experimental climate to come about. Some teachers are more cautious than others. Some have found a comfortable and successful method of teaching that works very well for most children. Some may have tried many ideas over the course of their careers and found those that work best for them. A climate of true experimentation

won't censure teachers who aren't consistently trying out new ideas.

An experimental attitude produces a creative atmosphere, where new ways to implement ideas are bandied about, and creative solutions to problems are sought. Good experimentation doesn't take flying leaps into the unknown, but constantly seeks new adaptations of older methods. This is often just what's needed in education.

An experimental attitude encourages people to think about what they're doing and be interested in what's possible. This means that children's performance isn't taken for granted; someone is always thinking about how things could be done better. When children's performance isn't taken for granted, it's more likely that individual needs will be addressed. For example, new ways of bringing slower students up to speed may be shared across grade levels, since upper grade teachers have an interest in lower grade colleagues preparing students adequately.

Experimentation always consumes resources. It becomes a key function of the administrator to spend a good deal of time in finding them. This means organizing parents to support teachers, being aware of grant opportunities, engaging in fund raising, networking with local businesses and industry, and using creative thinking to make do with what you have. This may be the single most important area for the administrator to employ creative thinking and problem solving.

Beware of the Art Trap

When art programs are the sole repository of creativity in school programs, the creative development of children becomes a budget problem rather than an instructional point of view. Creativity must wait until the resources are available to purchase artists' time or implement district programs in the arts.

In times of economic hardship, school systems tend to take care of other needs first.

But when creativity and methods for enhancing it are viewed as an integral part of children's development and intrinsic to the overall issue of self-esteem, then instructional practices rather than curricular objectives become the focus of attention. And instructional practice is what the administrator should really be concerned with.

As with all the conditions of self-esteem, the Sense of Uniqueness has an internal and external aspect. Internally, it is the feelings that determine the degree of satisfaction and comfort children and teachers have in expressing their essential Selves. The external aspect is those features in the environment that support the growth and development of the internal aspect. This is where the school administrator can make the greatest contribution to promoting creativity. Even though your direct day-to-day influence on children may be relatively small, the impact you can have through the climate you are instrumental in forming is considerable.

Children need to be given the special skills that will enable them to cope with versatility and flexibility when facing future conditions we can't accurately predict. Those who have certain personal qualities in addition to specific skills will have a distinct advantage in the world they'll be facing as adults. One of the most important personal qualities will be good self-esteem. Within that overall structure, respect for oneself and the ability to express the essential Self imaginatively and creatively will have special relevance.

Creativity as we have defined it is not an educational add-on but a fundamental attribute of a stimulating and inspiring educational program. The arts in all their variety have an important place in the overall curriculum of schools. But the arts are not the only area in which children's creativity can be nurtured and enhanced.

Teaching basic skills is not in conflict with allowing children to use their own internal resources to aid them in the learning process. Having an integrated and developmental curriculum need not preclude teachers from having wide variations in instructional practice that allow them to teach creatively. The active support of the school administrator is crucial in establishing a school environment where creativity can thrive.

Chapter

8 To the School Board: Creative Education at the District Level

The decisions made by the school board* move through so many levels in a district that it's almost impossible to connect the budget decision made in March with the educational experience children are having in October. As a school board member, you may view nurturing creativity in children in your district as something equally far removed from what it's possible for you to do.

You may also feel that fostering creativity is not your essential job. Taking care of the basic educational needs of a diverse population in your district seems a daunting enough task without having to worry about controversial areas such as creative expression. Education is undergoing much criticism lately, and concerned citizens are becoming concerned school board members. There is a need to prove the value of education and show that the schools in your district are doing a good job in providing what children need for life in this complex world.

* The term "school board" will be used while recognizing that such bodies may have different titles in various parts of the country. The author has been a school board member for twelve years.

Nurturing creativity may seem like a specialized activity that doesn't have much to do with children attaining competence in basic educational skills. This point of view reflects the commonly held idea that creativity is a special characteristic of a few children, not an inherent trait in all and an important aspect of healthy child development.

Creativity and giftedness have long been associated in the minds of educators and parents. Creativity is rarely thought of as a general feature of educational programs. As a school board member you can exercise leadership in changing the thinking of both the teaching staff of your district and the community that you represent.

There's More Than One Way to Do Things

School boards often fall into the trap of believing that a few simple ideas competently pursued will solve many of education's problems and teach kids what they need to know. Raising standards and expectations, teaching basic skills, longer school days and years, vouchers and competitiveness, requiring teachers to demonstrate competence, and more money overall are ideas that tend to gain passionate adherents.

Seeking an easy answer to education's problems is very seductive—especially when you're a school board member. It gives you something to hang your decisions on. Does a budget expense conform to the needs of a basic education program? If we raise standards will more kids take education more seriously? Yet in great measure we don't know the answers to these and many other questions that could be asked about how to structure the future of education. Most answers are speculative.

The real problem is that there are many different kinds of children in every district who have many different kinds of needs. School board members tend to be more familiar with

some of their constituents than others, and to view children's educational needs from a specific perspective. There are few communities that are homogeneous enough to benefit from simple educational programs designed to meet only a few specific needs for specific kinds of futures that children might experience.

It is not simply a matter of dividing children up into the rich kids and the poor kids. Ethnicity, economics, family dysfunction, drugs and various types of abuse affect and differentiate children in every school district, from rich suburbs to poor inner-city neighborhoods. Families vary widely in the degree to which they value schooling, and their children reflect their views. And all of these social and cultural features don't take into consideration the even greater differentiation engendered by physical, psychological and learning variations among the children in any school.

One of the underlying stresses of American education, and it's true in your district also, no matter how small it may be, is that the individual characteristics of the children in your schools will cause variations in success, no matter what programs you institute. No program, however finely designed, will work for everyone. There's no one correct way to do things in education. School boards that accept the need to acknowledge diversity and provide for breadth of opportunity are looking at things realistically. But how is such breadth of opportunity to be achieved with the limited resources at your command?

Encourage Diversity in Your District

School Boards can set a tone or climate in a district through the way in which they encourage and value diversity. Since boards work most closely with administrators, their first efforts must be at that level.

Hire diverse administrators. In seeking and hiring new administrators in your district, background experience should be the most important factor. Look for administrators who have a broad and diverse background, including a variety of assignments when they were teachers. Administrators who have worked with teachers and students across a broad spectrum of educational needs are more likely to encourage and respect diversity in the way their teachers teach.

Conduct study sessions at board meetings. Ask teachers and administrators to talk about the variety of things they're doing. Encourage diversity by asking them to present some of the most innovative ideas being tried in the district, whether these ideas have proven themselves yet or not. Devote time to discussion about where the district is headed programmatically over the next few years. These study sessions should be billed as informational for the board and community. No critiques of the presentations or decisions about them should be made at these meetings.

Acknowledge awards. Make sure that all special awards and grants the district may receive are acknowledged at board meetings. As much as possible, have the administrators or teachers who are the recipients of such awards be present to receive the thanks of the board. This is a symbolic gesture that communicates the board's interest in innovation and teacher initiative.

Support the arts as much as possible. Even though art programs are only one of the ways to support creativity in the district, they have a symbolic value for parents and teachers. Support of the arts shows that the board is interested in more than "bare bones" education. Provide public recognition for teachers who are doing unusual things with the arts in their classrooms.

Network with community agencies. Encourage the district to use other public and nonprofit agencies in support of efforts to nurturing creativity. Local art groups, museums and other cultural organizations may be able to mobilize support for activities when the school district can't afford to. But often it will have to be district personnel who come up with the ideas and get the ball rolling.

Recognize parents and other volunteers. Give public recognition to parents and other volunteers who work in creative areas within the district. Encourage the use of parents and volunteers to enhance opportunities in writing, art, drama and other expressive areas. Ask administrations to develop long-range plans for implementing and soliciting support for such volunteer programs. Give permission to different schools to do this in different ways.

Encourage diversity among your schools. Don't require that schools all have the same programs. Through discussion, encourage the idea that schools may have different strengths based on the variety of strengths in the teaching staff. While this is always true, there is a strong tendency in some districts to mask differences among schools in a competitive race to see which school can be best at achieving higher test scores or other measurable factors.

How the Board Conducts Business Sets the Climate

Many school boards are not aware of how their own performance sets a tone or climate for the district. The number of items coming before the board make it hard to see through the details to the overall effect the board is having on the way teachers, parents and the community feel about the district.

Many people have a tendency to mistrust any public board, reflecting a general distaste for authority or a skepticism about government in general. It is sometimes hard for a school board to separate itself from the negative attitudes people may have about government.

This is why the board's way of conducting business becomes so important. The school board has to develop its own reputation as a collective body whose actions are guided by professionalism, competence, compassion and concern for children's needs.

Play by your own rules. Conduct all board meetings with strict attention to the rules that exist for board behavior. Relax those rules only when doing so will help resolve conflicts, demonstrate concern for people's opinions, or allow the board to communicate its intention with greater clarity. When boards play by their own rules, public trust goes up; when they don't, the public as well as the employees grow to mistrust the board.

Tolerate differences within your own ranks. Disagreements over principles or philosophies among board members need not result in enervating conflict. They can produce energetic discussion and show the board's tolerance for diversity and differences within its own ranks. This can best happen when boards seek consensus, finding compromises among different opinions when possible. Continuing majority/minority vote splits are evidence that a board needs help in resolving conflicts within its ranks.

Establish a convivial atmosphere at board meetings. Conviviality is an important quality at board meetings. Meetings don't need to be long, ponderous, bureaucratic sessions that make people want to run from the room screaming! Humor, laughter and informality play an important role in establishing that the board is an open system, ready to deal with people in a humane and feeling manner. This is the very quality that

encourages staff members to feel they can explore new ideas without suffering criticism.

Bureaucracies and new ideas have never been comfortable together. The board can reduce the bureaucratic nature of most school district operations by having a convivial atmosphere at board meetings. A pot of coffee and some cookies isn't a bad idea, if the budget permits!

Include Creative Diversity in District Goals

The board should have a special interest in seeing that district goals, philosophies and objectives have creative elements in them. Goals should be reviewed periodically. Long-range planning, especially for program elements, should be encouraged. Even though long-range financial planning may be difficult in the present climate of limited financial resources, it is still possible to think about what the district should be doing in the future. Visionary thinking is always possible and useful, so when funds do become available there is a plan for how to use them.

Districts can have goals for programs in the arts. They can also have goals that represent interest in children's individuality and uniqueness. Such goals can be more than lip-service obeisance to the American veneration of individuality, especially if they are accompanied by specific objectives for various classes of children (e.g., special education, gifted, at-risk, ESL, learning disabled, emotionally disabled, etc.). When the board, through its goals, shows that it is aware of the differing needs of different groups within the district, it sets the tone for honoring the needs of individual children.

Boards can recognize the general issue of children's rights, as well as children's responsibilities, within the district by generating goals that honor those rights. Board members can

be advocates for children's rights, along with taking responsibility for the budget and personnel. This concern does not necessarily bring board members into conflict with administration nor does it require the board to overstep the boundaries that exist between policymaking and administrative action. Attention to children's rights is an important part of the district's efforts to be concerned with individual children's performance as well as group cohesion within classrooms and schools.

District goals can also recognize and support variation within teaching practices. A board can have goals that deal with respecting teachers' right to teach in ways that represent a broad array of instructional practices. Goals such as these also show the district's interest in high standards for teaching effectiveness. There is no conflict between encouraging instructional diversity and expecting good results. Different teachers are effective using different methods, even though some methods have proven their value over the years. The best teachers usually employ a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

A Creative Board Means a Creative District

The notion that a school board can be creative in the way it goes about its work seems farfetched. Boards are so beholden, in general, to the rules, laws and regulations of their states, and to the issues presented to them by administration, that it's difficult to see how creative action is possible.

As in most things the school board does, however, fostering creativity is best done by how you handle the people who are your agents for making your district the best it can be. These are the administrators who interact with you most closely at board meetings. Your relationship to them can be humane, warm,

encouraging and permissive. The actions and attitudes of the board can go a long way toward making these agents, from the superintendent on down, feel safe enough to take the initiative in promoting creative action and change within the district.

There are many districts in which the reluctance of the school board to support innovation places a limit or cap on the willingness of staff to promote creative initiatives. Board members with personal agendas shoot down ideas that don't conform to their presuppositions. Excessive concern for down-line funding undermines the willingness to even explore a new idea. Simplistic thinking about basic education precludes creative thinking in other areas. Focusing on measurable results, such as test scores, makes suspect activities that don't seem to directly support such measurement.

Administrators often censor ideas before ever presenting them to the board if the board has demonstrated resistance to new ideas. Smart administrators don't present things that they know will not be approved or supported. Their jobs are not worth the risk. Thus good ideas may die before they even get to the board.

The board has an important responsibility to create and maintain an open climate in which administrators feel free to propose new ideas, knowing they'll be given fair and open consideration. This means that the board must be proactive in encouraging administrators to bring forth ideas. Establishing such a climate is how the board itself can become a creative element in the district. Here are some suggestions:

- Support board/administrator meetings that are devoted to exploring new ideas.
- Work closely within a committee structure that permits board members to interact with staff and teachers so that encouragement for innovative thinking can be communicated to all levels directly.

- Attend meetings of your state school board association and other relevant conventions, seminars and workshops so that board members are conversant with new thinking in education. Go with administrators to those meetings so you can discuss new ideas informally.
- Encourage administrators to circulate reprint articles from educational journals. Have board subscriptions to such journals, so that members can keep up with current educational issues.

School board members are generally not professional educators. This is the way we've arranged our public educational system in the United States. This arrangement is based on the presumption that education is a social and cultural process that is best kept in the hands of ordinary citizens and community members. It is also a representation of the peculiarly American invention of checks and balances in our government structures.

School board members, professional administrators, teachers and support personnel all have special roles to play. Each constituency has a different set of interests that are best kept in balance with the interests of the other groups. In order to maintain their appropriate role in this web of responsibility, school boards need to keep abreast of the diversity of thinking in American education.

It's not necessary to become a professional educator in order to be a good board member. It's also not necessary to become a rubber stamp for professional administrators. It is important to become well informed and familiar with current educational thought, as much as possible. When board members actively pursue such interests in the ways described above, teachers and administrators can feel more confident in the board's ability to keep up with educational thinking and to not be intimidated by change or innovation. In this way the school board can play a vital role in establishing a districtwide commitment to creative education.

Appendix A

Personal Arena Behavior Checklists

The following checklists will help you identify and understand behavior associated with each condition of self-esteem. You can use the checklists to help determine which condition is a child's critical condition. The larger the number of index behaviors observed, and the greater the frequency or intensity of the behaviors, the greater the difficulty the child has with that particular condition.

Uniqueness

- ☐ Seems to be in reverie frequently. Stares abstractedly at walls or ceilings while not paying attention.
- ☐ Seems to talk to self or make noticeable noises.
- ☐ Speaks negatively about self and accomplishments frequently.
- ☐ Takes little or no pride in appearance.
- ☐ Shows little imagination. Rarely comes up with original ideas, but they are quite unusual if and when they do appear.
- ☐ Demonstrates little regard for own ideas, interests or abilities. Rarely expresses an opinion or feeling different from what others have expressed.
- ☐ Does things as told, rarely improvises.
- ☐ Is uncomfortable when called on or singled out.
- ☐ Seeks praise and recognition often, but becomes embarrassed, denies or disregards recognition when it is given.
- ☐ Shows off when it is inappropriate.
- ☐ Usually conforms to others' wishes or ideas, particularly peers'. Is a follower, and rarely, if ever, a leader.
- ☐ Interacts with others in an awkward and mechanical way, categorizing people in simplistic terms and being critical of their personal characteristics. Tries to find ways to be like others rather than accept differences.
- ☐ Rarely, if ever, takes delight in personal accomplishments, even if the accomplishment results in praise or recognition from others.

Connectiveness

- ☐ Is easily distracted and spends much time watching others in many different settings.
- ☐ When allowed to choose seating will elect to sit near doors, walls or at the periphery of the group.
- ☐ Wears excessive clothing, relative to the activity or the temperature. Doesn't like to remove hat, jacket or other outdoor apparel when indoors.
- ☐ Does not communicate easily and is unable to listen to others and understand their viewpoint.
- ☐ Is shy, has few or no friends, and actively avoids social situations. Is unaware of others' interests or needs.
- ☐ Talks negatively about family or ethnic group.
- ☐ Seldom, if ever, volunteers to help others.
- ☐ Is disliked by peers.
- ☐ Acts uncomfortable around adults, or else constantly seeks their attention.
- ☐ Always wants to be in the center of things, and/or constantly tries to be noticed.
- ☐ More often relates to things or animals rather than people. Carries a lot of "stuff" around in pockets and bags, and values it excessively. Spends a lot of time with pets, takes them to bed and so on.
- ☐ Has trouble stating ideas and feelings directly and asking for needs.
- ☐ Is uncomfortable about touching others or being touched.
- ☐ Makes others uncomfortable when touching them. Doesn't have the "appropriate touch" in many situations.

Power

- ☐ Avoids taking responsibility. Will not initiate needed projects on own and will have to be reminded about required duties.
- ☐ Shies away from challenging tasks and won't take risks in areas where judgments may be made about success or failure.
- ☐ Has limited skills in many areas and does not actively pursue improving skills.
- ☐ Has poor control over body. Is often awkward or physically inept at common tasks, although may have prowess in some sports.
- ☐ Frequently acts helpless and gives up on tasks, even simple ones, when obstacles, even minor ones, occur.
- ☐ Avoids being in charge of others.
- ☐ Lacks emotional self-control. Anger, fear, hysteria, inability to deal with frustrations, crying and depression occur easily, often in combination with each other.
- ☐ Always wants to be the leader or have own way, but will do so in a way leading to failure or conflict. Will lead in such a way that others must take responsibility in order to avoid failure.
- ☐ Shows resistance to directives through foot-dragging, avoidance and denial.
- ☐ Avoids stating needs and interests assertively and often goes along with others, especially when they have strong opinions or ideas.
- ☐ Is often stubborn and resistant in situations in which no threat or possibility of failure is imminent.
- ☐ Blames others for things that are obviously not their responsibility whenever failure or problems occur.

Models

- ☐ Gets confused easily and wastes time with apparently aimless activity.
- ☐ Becomes obsessively involved with activities that are unrelated to the task at hand.
- ☐ Is poorly organized in both thinking and behavior.
- ☐ Is confused easily about what is right and wrong.
- ☐ Has a difficult time deciding what to do or say, even in situations that should be quite familiar.
- ☐ Responds to instruction and directions in a resistant manner that is always associated with confusion or ambivalence.
- ☐ Is unsure about methods and purposes that are associated with an activity.
- ☐ Will continually seek directions or insist there is only one way to do something, persisting obsessively in doing it that way, despite failure.
- ☐ Has rigid standards and tends to get upset easily when others don't conform to those standards.
- ☐ Avoids or acts awkwardly in social situations requiring some formal etiquette.
- ☐ Doesn't respond well to instruction and expects not to know what is going on.

Appendix B

Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Self-Esteem

There are a number of strategies you can use in the Interpersonal Arena to build each of the four conditions in children. The following lists offer some suggestions.

Techniques to Build Uniqueness

- Notice and affirm special characteristics and talents, even though they may be unusual or not to your taste.
- Encourage children to express their own ideas, even though they are different from your own.
- Provide alternative ways for children to express feelings; writing if it's easier than speaking, drawing if it's easier than writing, and so on.
- Communicate acceptance, even when you must limit children's behavior.
- Identify the positive aspects of unusual ideas or behavior and compliment them, rather than criticizing the negative aspects.
- Respect children's privacy, especially their desks, space and possessions.

- Allow children to perform duties and responsibilities in their own way, as much as possible.
- Find out what children think is special about themselves and provide opportunities for expressing their specialness.
- Help children find the resources and opportunities for exploring special interests.
- Avoid using ridicule and shame, even if there is a need to limit or stop a child's behavior.
- Try to understand the special circumstances of family or background influencing children's behavior and let the children know that you understand.
- Help children find effective ways to express themselves so as to help themselves and others.

Techniques to Build Connectiveness

- Show affection directly, often through brief, undemanding physical contact (e.g., patting shoulders, touching hands).
- Show approval when behavior justifies it, even though the children have previously done something to elicit criticism.
- Be public with praise, saying positive things about the children or their performance so others can hear, but don't require them to become the center of attention if they show discomfort.
- Let children know when they have contributed to the overall progress of the group or class. Make such comments public and let others know about the contribution.
- Share your own feelings, even though the children may disparage or criticize them.

- Share your interests, hobbies and activities, even though the children may not indicate interest.
- Show approval in some way when you notice the children have related well to others.
- Listen non-judgmentally as much as possible. Do not feel everything children say needs to be commented on, agreed or disagreed with, criticized or praised.
- Respect children's relationships with friends and provide opportunities for friends to work together as well as encouraging new relationships.
- Spend time alone with children when other classmates are not present.
- Find ways to do something special with children that satisfies their particular interests or needs.
- Use indirect methods of communicating, such as leaving notes in books or special personal comments on returned assignments.
- Respect children's need to have object relations when interpersonal ones are troubling, so that children will not be prematurely sanctioned for playing with something while trying to work.

Techniques to Build Power

- Encourage personal responsibility by asking questions more often than you make statements. Show how children's choices have produced the results they obtained.
- Help children understand how their own decision-making processes work.

- Help children evaluate their own problem-solving processes and teach them ways to solve problems effectively.
- Affirm success, even though children indicate that they feel they have failed. Show which parts of an activity were successful and which parts weren't.
- Acknowledge and show respect for children's current level of competence in any area, as well as showing how to increase competence.
- Encourage children to set *short-range* objectives and show them how to develop a short-range plan for accomplishing them successfully. Fight the notion that things are out of control.
- Acknowledge that the children have had a positive effect on others when it is appropriate, and seek evidence that this has occurred.
- Provide lots of alternatives when asking children to make choices, but make sure the limits of the available alternatives are clear.
- Hold children accountable for events that are truly under their control or influence, even if they seem to indicate they were controlled by other forces or events.
- Help children set limits, especially in regard to what they will not do to others and not let others do to them; and show them how to honor and maintain those limits. Acknowledge the difficulty of setting and keeping to the limits and disciplines one sets up for oneself.

Techniques to Build Models

- You are the primary model for children in your classroom, and your behavior, in general, has an impact on them. The more consistently, fairly and ethically you can behave, with conscious attention to the values and beliefs that underlie your actions, the more the children will be helped.
- Help children understand what they believe by giving them an opportunity to express their beliefs in contexts where they will not feel challenged or criticized.
- Help children set goals for their lives and learning, while recognizing that such goals may be short-lived. Help children accept the fact that goals change over time.
- Have children face the consequences of their actions, without trying to shield them from harm they may have caused others.
- Help children learn how to do the things they are required to do at a high level of excellence.
- Set, maintain and hold to very high standards in all things you do with children, while recognizing and accepting that they will not always be able to live up to them. Progress toward a high standard should be seen as a success.
- Emphasize strengths rather than handicaps or liabilities; stress the positive rather than negative; point out successes more quickly than failures.
- Share what you believe with children in appropriate and relevant ways, without requiring their adherence to your beliefs.
- Always clarify what, why, where, when and how when assigning a task or duty to children.

Appendix C

Group Arena Techniques For Building Self-Esteem

There are a number of strategies you can use in the Group Arena to build each of the four conditions in children. The following lists offer some suggestions. The techniques suggested are applicable both for classrooms and the school as a whole.

Techniques to Build Uniqueness

- Have opportunities for children to do projects where personal expression is not graded: art projects, books, scrapbooks, and so on.
- Design activities in which differences among people are emphasized, helping children understand how being different from each other is acceptable and desirable.
- Observe children in your classroom or group carefully in order to identify special attributes that they will not express directly to you.
- Develop activities in which children's special interests and needs can determine the use of materials and products: personal essays and stories, art projects and other self-selected activities.

- Have a variety of learning opportunities available in the classroom.
- Allow as much free time as possible where children can choose their own activities within clearly described limits.
- Create special roles within the classroom or group. Make sure each child has the opportunity to play different roles with respect to the group.
- Provide assignments requiring children to assess and clarify their personal values and beliefs and allow them the opportunity to compare theirs with others.
- Provide multiple rewards and opportunities for individual recognition so all children can achieve some special status.

Techniques to Build Connectiveness

- Create opportunities for children to share personal experiences with each other.
- Develop cooperative learning or group tasks which require children to work together in order to complete them successfully.
- Have class or group meetings in which problems are discussed and decisions made. Help children learn effective group and interpersonal skills that facilitate problem solving and decision making.
- Create activities in which the entire class or group can participate, such as projects, sports, plays and service activities.
- Develop alternative relationship opportunities, remembering that children connect to people, places and things.

A "calming teddy bear" children can hold when feeling anxious, a "safe desk" children can sit at when feeling unsafe in relationship to others, and a "time-out" space or room children can visit when relations are becoming problematic are some possibilities.

- Emphasize service to others in the classroom or group and provide many opportunities for the group to engage in service activities in the school or community.
- Have occasions in which the focus is on the families or cultural and ethnic associations of the class or group. Provide opportunities for children to focus on their own heritage.
- Create opportunities for children to identify with the school or organization through activities that enhance such identification. Engage children in planning and carrying out such activities.
- Organize learning teams so associations around the work of the class or group become normal and natural.
- Increase the number of special events, parties and outings that the class or group is responsible for.
- De-emphasize individuality and autonomy while emphasizing cooperation and teamwork. Do not be put off or embarrassed by being disparaged. Recognize that avoiding being cooperative is more often a result of lack of skill in cooperative behavior than a rejection of it.
- Have clear and consistent relationship standards, with appropriate displays and reminders. Have positive standards—"Be Helpful to Others"—as well as negative ones—"No Fighting."

Techniques to Build Power

- Allow children to participate as much as possible in defining their learning goals, what is to be done and how.
- Give children as much choice as possible about when and how to do things. Maximize alternatives and always try to have at least two options in any activity.
- Have children act as teachers and tutors to each other and to younger people, especially in areas where they show competence. Help them find ways to share their skills.
- Involve children in setting rules for the classroom, group or school. Make such involvement meaningful by giving them the responsibility and resources to monitor the rules they set.
- Help children acquire better control over their feelings and physical bodies through movement, dance, sports and exercises.
- Pay special attention to interpersonal skills as a special skill area and develop learning activities to teach such skills.
- Help children develop a stronger sense of the relationship between work and benefits by creating "economies" that provide concrete rewards for successful performance. Mimic the real world as much as possible.
- Teach democratic decision-making processes, use them as much as possible, and help children acquire skills to work with and influence the groups in which they participate.
- Allow children to work at their level of competence as long as possible before requiring them to proceed. Know-

ing what one can do well is a more useful awareness than knowing what one still hasn't learned.

- Help children understand their own learning styles and teach them more effective ways to learn things.

Techniques to Build Models

- State rules, and consequences for breaking them, clearly and follow through consistently.
- Have clear standards for work and behavior and follow them consistently.
- Make options clear and state the variations that will be permitted within a framework.
- Do things to make work in the classroom or organization more enjoyable (e.g., play music, use humor) so children can associate work and learning with pleasant feelings.
- Keep the issue of personal values and standards of behavior constantly in front of children by showing how such factors apply to whatever they do.
- Expose children to adults who are worthy of their emulation, and who are able to relate their experiences to the children's. Help children learn how successful people accomplish their goals, through real life association, literature or film.
- Share your personal values and interests with children and invite them, as much as possible, to involve themselves in your interests in ways that are appropriate and relevant.
- Make use of tutors and assistants who are slightly older or more experienced than your children. Children can

learn a lot from role models who are only slightly more advanced than they are.

- Encourage neatness and orderliness in your classroom or school and require children to live up to those standards.
- Increase the range of children's experiences through activities that take them out of the school and by bringing many alternatives into the classroom and school.

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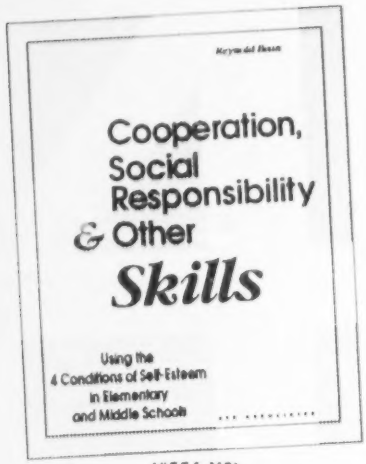
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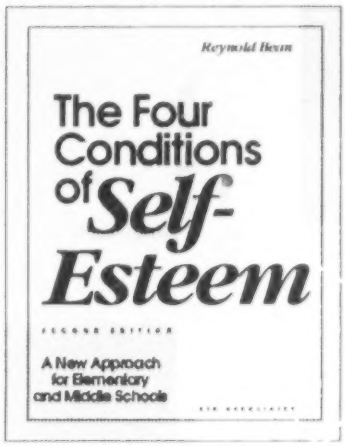

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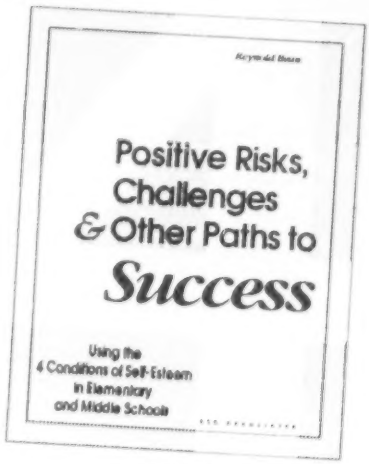
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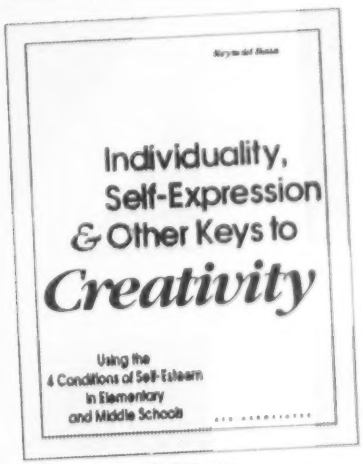
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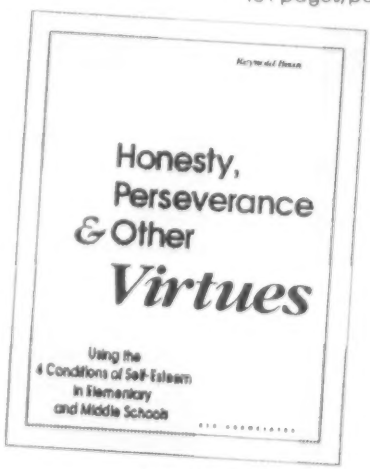
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